

Horror in Culture Entertainment

RETRO HORROR



COMMEMORATING

RETRO VHS HORROR

WNUF HALLOWEEN SPECIAL SEQUEL 🍷 INSIDE THE V/H/S FILM FRANCHISE

ATMOSFEAR TURNS 30 🍷 HOLLYWOOD'S SLASHBACK VIDEO



ISSUE 208 SEPT / OCT 2022 US \$13.95 CAN \$14.95



25 GHOSTLIEST
MUSIC VIDEOS
OF THE PAST 25 YEARS

TERRIFIER 2
ART THE CLOWN RETURNS!

CRYPTIDS
OF AMERICA

NIGHTMARE WORLDS OF
SCORN

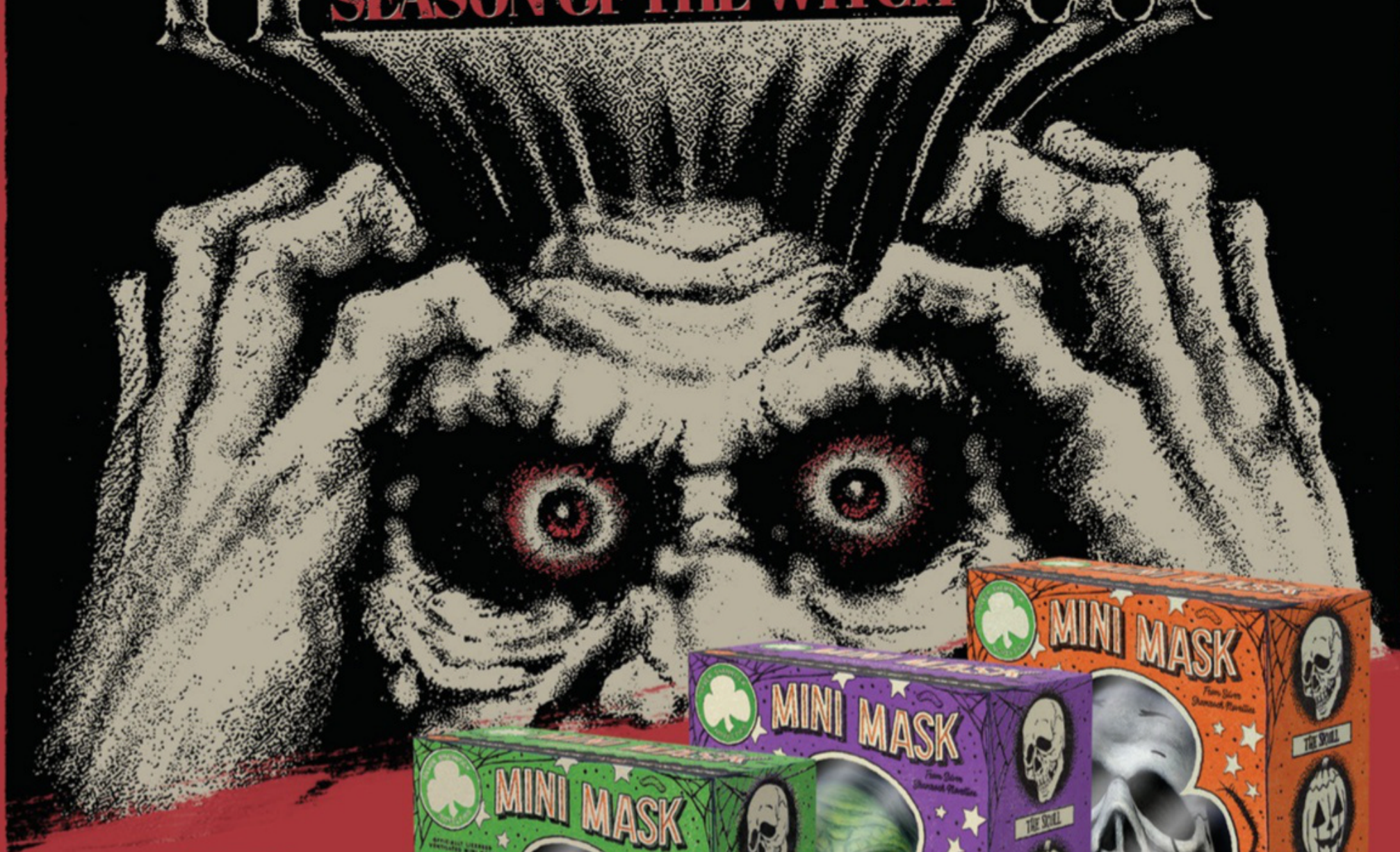
PLUS!

DIAMANDA GALÁS • MY BEST FRIEND'S EXORCISM - THE MOVIE
TOIL & TROUBLE: A WOMEN'S HISTORY OF THE OCCULT • TWISTED TALES

THIS SEPTEMBER
OFFICIALLY LICENSED
40TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

HALLOWEEN III

SEASON OF THE WITCH



NEW TEES
& ALL NEW
HALLOWEEN III
SEASON OF THE WITCH
MINI-MASKS

ONLY
6"
TALL



FRIGHT
RAGS
FRIGHT-RAGS.COM

USE CODE RM0922 AND SAVE 10% OFF YOUR ORDER THRU 11.30.22

WELCOME TO THE **SHOCK SHOP™**

CULLEN
BUNN

DANNY
LUCKERT

LEILA
LEIZ

BILL
CRABTREE



AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS SHOP

To find a comics shop in your area, visit comicshoplocator.com
For more information or to order direct visit DarkHorse.com



Shock Shop™ © 2022 Cullen Bunn. Something
in the Woods™ © 2022 Cullen Bunn and Daniel
Luckert. Familiars™ © 2022 Cullen Bunn and Leila
Ziane. Dark Horse Comics® and the Dark Horse
logo are trademarks of Dark Horse Comics LLC,
registered in various categories and countries.
All rights reserved.

**A BRAND-NEW
HORROR ANTHOLOGY
THAT TAKES PLACE
IN A HAUNTED COMIC
BOOK SHOP!**

FEATURING BACK COVERS BY FAN FAVORITE
ARTISTS FRANCESCO FRANCAVILLA,
FABIO MOON, JAMES STOKOE,
AND MORE!

BLACK PHOENIX ALCHEMY LAB



Extraordinary Scents for Extraordinary People



www.BlackPhoenixAlchemyLab.com



12 VIDEO HORROR SYSTEM

Rue Morgue commemorates the phenomenon that was (and is) VHS, the revolutionary media format that continues to change the way we make and watch horror movies. Featuring *Out There Halloween Megatape*, the all-new film from the mad mind behind 2013's *WNUF Halloween Special*; inside the *V/H/S* franchise; Hollywood's *Slashback* Video; and the return of the original VHS horror game, *Atmosfear*.

by **PAUL CORUPE**, **WILLIAM WRIGHT**, **DAKOTA DAHL**, **BRYAN CHRISTOPHER** and **ANDREA SUBISSATI**

RUE MORCUE'S 25 GHASTLIEST MUSIC 26 VIDEOS OF THE PAST 25 YEARS

While the golden age of music videos may lie in the heyday of MTV, that's not to say that the art of the music video ever died. In many respects it only got more daring and ambitious.

PLUS! SFX legend Norman Cabrera has spent nearly four decades manufacturing music video mayhem, and music videos shot by famous horror filmmakers!

by **ALEX DELLER**, **AARON VON LUPTON** and **STAFF**

36 SEND IN THE CLOWN!

After shocking audiences with an orgy of unforgettable carnage in 2016, Art the Clown returns to wreak bloody havoc this Halloween in *Terrifier 2*.

by **ANDREA SUBISSATI**

42 LAND OF LEGENDS

J.W. Ocker's new book, *The United States of Cryptids*, invites readers on a cross-country hunt for creatures that continue to haunt the American psyche.

PLUS! Lyle Blackburn of *Monstro Bizarro* pours his cryptid passion into a new podcast.

by **OWEN WILLIAMS**

48 GRUESOME

Forty years ago this year, Pacific Comics debuted *Twisted Tales*, one of the little known and best-kept secrets amongst fans of comic book horror.

by **CHRISTOPHER BEVARD**

54 RATED M FOR MACABRE

An immersive journey into the nightmarish hells-capes of H.R. Giger, *Scorn* is designed to test your sanity... on every level.

by **ANDREA SUBISSATI**

DEPARTMENTS

NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND 6

Bringing the Horror Home.

POST-MORTEM 7

Letters from fans, readers, and weirdos.

THE CORONER'S REPORT 8

Weird Stats & Morbid Facts, Expiring Minds, Shadowland, and more!

NEEDFUL THINGS 10

Strange trinkets from our bazaar of the bizarre.

CINEMACABRE 58

The newest films reviewed, featuring *My Best Friend's Exorcism*.

REISSUED & RE-ANIMATED 72

REVIVED: *House of Psychotic Women: Rarities Collection*.

BOWEN'S BASEMENT 74

DUG UP: *Ticks* (1993).

BLACK MUSEUM 76

EXHIBIT: *The Bat* (1959).

BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS 78

INKED IN: Josh Eisner's *The Very Final Last Girls*.

THE NINTH CIRCLE 80

SPOTLIGHT: *Toil & Trouble: A Women's History of the Occult*.

THE FRIGHT GALLERY 84

ON DISPLAY: The Sinister Sentimentality of Steven Rhodes.

DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS 86

CURIO: What you didn't see in *The Exorcist*.

AUDIO DROME 89

NOW PLAYING: Diamanda Galás.

PLAY DEAD 92

PLAYING: *The Quarry* and *Fobia* – *St. Dinfna Hotel*.

VS 94

DEBATE: What is the best horror movie of the past 25 years to watch on Halloween night?

NOTE FROM UNDERGROUND

Is it Halloween again already? It seems like only yesterday I was hanging cobwebs on the walls and spraying my face with fake blood... oh wait, that *was* yesterday. It might be Halloween year-round for us horror fans, but this year is especially momentous for the twisted souls at the Rue Morgue Manor as we celebrate 25 years!

So much has changed in the past quarter-century – culturally, technologically, and otherwise – but *Rue Morgue* has persisted with the unflagging determination of the masked slashers we know and love. Our evolution from a free, black-and-white zine to the glossy pages you now hold in your hands has defied more odds than the eponymous final girl, and we've fought just as hard to survive and thrive. This is what makes it a perfect opportunity to look back on the era that changed horror forever, a time when the anticipation of a trip to the video store was as much a part of the fan experience as the fright fare itself. The VHS format might be crude and analog, but that's only proven to be part of its appeal among '80s monster kids. Its retro charms endure to this day – not unlike the nostalgic feel of printed pages that you experience every time you open your latest issue of *Rue Morgue*.

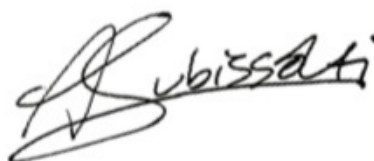
It's no understatement to say that without VHS bringing horror into our homes and hearts, *Rue Morgue* would be a different beast altogether. Whereas it was once the role of horror magazines to provide fright fans with their only opportunity to read about new releases outside of seeing them during their theatrical runs, home video broadened our horizons, paving the way for more in-depth coverage of movies, new and cult classics alike, which we can now access with a click of a button. VHS walked so that Shudder and other streaming services could run, so to speak, and we owe it a great debt of gratitude. *Rue Morgue* prides itself on the kind of analytical inquiry you can't find anywhere else, and it's only fitting to celebrate our 25th anniversary with the technological revolution that continues to make this possible.

In addition to the magazine's momentous milestone, it's also Monica S. Kuebler's twentieth anniversary with the company! She's worn many black pointed hats here at *Rue Morgue* over the past two decades, and I personally treasure the experience of going from her fan and admirer to her friend and colleague. Her meticulous wordsmithing has been invaluable to *Rue Morgue* and remains an ongoing source of inspiration to us all. Also celebrating anniversaries are Aaron von Lupton, at ten years helming the infernal DJ booth of the Audio Drome section, and James Burrell, who has contributed his staggering knowledge of vintage horror collectibles for the past fifteen! Please join me in raising a bubbling alcoholic concoction in recognition of these fine scribes this Halloween season.

And finally, another terrible toast is due to our founder and president, Rodrigo Gudiño, my dear friend and mentor, whose contributions to the horror genre go well beyond the creation of this esteemed periodical. His new feature film *The Breach* will have premiered at several film fests by the time this issue hits stands, and a new production company in the works promises many more scares to come from his mad mind.

As for me, a mere link in the bloody chain of *Rue Morgue's* esteemed editors, I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity to guide this ship through the stormy waters of the past five years and to share my passion for the genre with our ever-growing family of readers and subscribers. Truly, every year that an independent genre print periodical endures is an occasion worth celebrating, and our continued commitment to providing the most incisive coverage of all things horror is an honour for our readers and staff alike. So here's to you, wretched reader; may your *Rue Morgue* collection continue to grow for another quarter century (at least)!

Happy Halloween!



ANDREA SUBISSATI
andrea@rue-morgue.com

Horror in Culture & Entertainment
RUE MORGUE
MARRS MEDIA INC. RUE-MORGUE.COM
1411 DUFFERIN STREET, TORONTO, ONTARIO, M6H 4C7, CANADA
PH: 416.651.9675 FAX: 416.651.6085 EMAIL: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM
FB: FACEBOOK.COM/RUEMORGUEMAGAZINE TWITTER: TWITTER.COM/RUEMORGUE

STAFF

PUBLISHER RODRIGO GUDIÑO	EXECUTIVE EDITOR ANDREA SUBISSATI
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR MONICA S. KUEBLER	MUSIC EDITOR AARON VON LUPTON
ART DIRECTOR ANDREW WRIGHT	GAMES EDITOR EVAN MILLAR
OPERATIONS COORDINATOR MARIAM BASTANI	STAFF WRITER SEAN PLUMMER
FINANCIAL CONTROLLER MARCO PECOTA	HEAD ONLINE WRITER MICHAEL GINGOLD
INTERNS ALEXANDREA FIORANTE LAURA HOKSTAD HARALAMBO KERIAZES	ONLINE MANAGING EDITOR WILLIAM J. WRIGHT
MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS MANAGER JODY INFURNARI PH: 905-985-0430 E: jody@rue-morgue.com	ONLINE ASSISTANT EDITOR GRACE DETWILER
	SPECIAL PROJECTS MANAGER DAVE ALEXANDER

RUE MORGUE INTERNATIONAL

FABIEN DELAGE (FRANCE) facebook.com/RueMorgueFrance
CHARLOTTE STEAR (UK) facebook.com/RueMorgueUK
AARON SOTO (MEXICO) facebook.com/RueMorgueMexico

CONTRIBUTORS

DENMAN C. ANDERSON	RICK HIPSON
CHRISTOPHER BEVARD	SEAN KELLY
BENOIT BLACK	LAST CHANCE LANCE
JOHN W. BOWEN	JUSTIN MCDEVITT
JESSICA BUCK	KEN MICHAELS
JAMES BURRELL	HATE MIOR
PEDRO CABEZUELO	LISA MORTON
BRYAN CHRISTOPHER	DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ
JAY CLARKE	STACIE PONDER
RYAN COLEMAN	DANIEL ROBERTSON
PAUL CORUPE	TRACY ROBINSON
DEIRDRE CRIMMINS	PAIGE REYNOLDS
JOSE CRUZ	JEFF SZPIRGLAS
DAKOTA DAHL	ROCCO T. THOMPSON
ALEX DELLER	OWEN WILLIAMS
CHRIS HAMMOND	

RUE MORGUE #208 would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of Colby Tortorici, Steve Barton, Al McMullan, and Deadly Grounds Coffee.

Cover Art: VHS
Design by Andrew Wright

We acknowledge the land that *Rue Morgue* is created upon is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Rue Morgue magazine is published bi-monthly and accepts no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photos, art or other materials. Freelance inquiries can be submitted at Rue-Morgue.com.

Funded by the Government of Canada | **Canada**

RUE MORGUE Magazine #208 ISSN 1481 – 1103
Agreement No. 40033764
Entire contents copyright MARRS MEDIA INC. 2022.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN CANADA.

POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



COLLECTIVELY, HORROR FANS need let go of the “nothing but remakes and sequels!” gripes. For one: *Rue* consistently highlights what else is out there from all corners of the globe. Secondly, it’s not a new trend. Never forget the OG Universal Monsters each had, like, six sequels and then a few more mash-up offshoots. Aren’t we all pleased that at least *Bride of Frankenstein* came out of it? Should no one have attempted *Frankenstein* again after Edison in 1910? Judy Garland’s *Wizard of Oz* is technically a remake even. And where would we be without remakes like *The Thing*, *The Fly*, and even *The Blob*? What would we do without all the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, etc. sequels that introduced, carried, and sustained many of our loves of horror? Easy and recognizable examples, but you get the point. True, for everything that works, there are 50 that don’t, but how great is it to just have the option? Would you rather *not* have weird, wild, divisive things like *Gremlins 2* and *Texas Chainsaw Part 2* to mess with your mind? Movie-making is a business first. If something makes money, do it until it doesn’t. That philosophy has existed within the medium since its inception and will never fade. When things stop working, then a few fresh ideas get put out or new filmmakers are given a chance, everyone goes crazy for the freshness... and the cycle repeats. Enjoy the ride while it lasts, friends!

CHRIS THE PANDA, VIA EMAIL

I’VE BEEN READING your magazine for several years. My daughter is always interested in what the cover will look like when the new issue arrives. So naturally she loves to wear this shirt. We look forward to many more years!

JESS Y – ADDRESS WITHHELD



THE CRAMPS reference [in Audio Drome review, *RM#207*] was funny... years ago, when Lux passed away, *Rue Morgue* was the only national magazine that put him on the cover, which showed a lot of class. I responded online thanking y’all and my tiny little sentence was in your Post Mortem section the next issue. After Lux passed, I spent three years going through everything The Cramps listened to, covered, and

totally engrossed myself with it. I listened to little else. Then I decided to start my own band with my interpretation, carrying on the tradition of bad music for bad people.

ALABAMA SHARP OF THE GO-GO KILLERS, VIA EMAIL

SO SAD TO HEAR of Glenn Tilson’s passing. Extra tough, as Audio Drome is my favourite section of the mag. I could see a little bit of myself in Aaron’s touching tribute. Rest in power, indeed.

J.D. – MARYLAND, USA

THE ARRIVAL of the first @*RueMorgue* magazine to our new address! Since 2009, “*Rue Morgue Day*” is my favourite day of the month (or every two months, as the schedule stands now) and I’m just as excited today as when I received my very first issue!

@MLLEGHOU, VIA TWITTER

I’VE BEEN PLAYING *The Mortuary Assistant* on Steam off my laptop and it is great. I also bought the new issue of *Rue Morgue* and have it on me now to read while I travel. Great issue thus far.

MIKE CHRIS, VIA FACEBOOK

THANKS @*RueMorgue* and @necromandrea for the deluxe sub offer! Jumped on it instantly!

@SAAJEFLALESS, VIA TWITTER

I COLLECTED *Rue Morgue* for a while and cut out a ton of cool photos, made a collage on an old vintage kidney

bean table. Cool as hell.

@BITING_THE_BULLET82, VIA INSTAGRAM

I’VE BEEN A READER since *RM#7*, the U.S. debut, and a subscriber for many years. The best magazine in the genre.

@JOSEPHROSA77, VIA INSTAGRAM

I JUST RECEIVED my second issue last week and can’t tell you enough how gorgeous they’ve been. I was expecting something akin to the old *Fangoria* but you have way more content than I imagined, and thoughtful content at that. So glad

I locked in for two years! Love the *Faculty of Horror* podcast, too! Your hard work is loved and appreciated. I spent twenty years in publishing, so I know how hard it is to fire on all pistons all the time.

@FROGELIXIR, VIA INSTAGRAM

RE: “Laura Uses Crowley’s Tarot Deck to Gaze Into Jake West’s *Razor Blade Smile*” on *Rue Morgue TV* – Really enjoying this series! Me and my wife

have watched every episode you’ve done so far. We especially enjoyed this one, since *Razor Blade Smile* is something of a household classic. It would be cool if you did an episode on *The Quarry*. It’s a game, yeah, but it’s got a lot of tarot readings by the one and only Grace Zabriskie.

NIGELLA SUGER, VIA YOUTUBE

RE: “How *Scanners* Exploded David Cronenberg’s Career” on *Rue Morgue TV* – Such a fascinating subject and result of a deep look at a movie. Really an amazing cast. Jennifer O’Neill is incredibly memorable in her role. But, Stephen Lack and Michael Ironside make it a holy trinity. Thanks once again RJ!

MARCUSAURILEUS, VIA YOUTUBE

FIND RUE MORGUE ONLINE

f : [FACEBOOK.COM/RUEMORQUEMAGAZINE](https://www.facebook.com/ruemorguemagazine)

t : [TWITTER.COM/RUEMORQUE](https://twitter.com/ruemorgue)

i : [@RUEMORQUEMAG](https://www.instagram.com/ruemorguemag)

WE ENCOURAGE READERS TO SEND THEIR COMMENTS VIA MAIL OR EMAIL. LETTERS MAY BE EDITED FOR LENGTH AND/OR CONTENT. PLEASE SEND TO [INFO@RUE-MORQUE.COM](mailto:info@rue-morgue.com) OR:

POST MORTEM

C/O RUE MORGUE MAGAZINE
1411 DUFFERIN STREET
TORONTO, ONTARIO M6H 4C7 CANADA



CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

ISSUE #
208

Stephen King's childhood typewriter was a second-hand Underwood on which the "M" key had broken off – an anecdote he would later borrow for his 1987 novel *Misery*.

A Judas goat refers to a trained animal used for herding and who often leads other animals to slaughter while its own life is spared.

The gravity drive fire sequence in *Event Horizon* (1997) actually caused a real fire that destroyed some of the set. While it was being repaired, another set had to be built on the fly.

Arachibutyrophobia is the fear of being choked by peanut butter.

Orange and black were chosen to represent Halloween because they symbolize the warmth and harvest of autumn and the darkness of winter.

The showrunners of the *Friday the 13th* TV series once considered using Jason Voorhees' hockey mask as the last cursed item for the series finale.

Over an average lifetime, humans will produce about 6500 gallons of mucus, enough to fill a large tanker truck.

In 2005, a Welsh rugby fan named Geoff Huish, 26, celebrated his team's win over England by cutting off his own testicles.

All the characters in *Cube* (1997) are named after actual prisons or psychiatric hospitals.

More soldiers were executed during the American Civil War than in all other American wars combined. Of the approximately 500 men hanged or shot, two-thirds were executed for desertion.

1932's *White Zombie* was allegedly inspired by a Broadway play called *Zombie*, despite it having a mere three-week-run at the Biltmore Theatre.

After being spared the electric chair, convicted murderer Michael Godwin later died from electrocution in his cell while trying to repair a broken TV set.

Ahead of his title role in 1992's *Candyman*, Tony Todd negotiated a \$1000 bonus for each time he was stung by a bee, a tally that ended up being 23.

COMPILED BY JAY CLARKE
GOT A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT?
SEND IT TO: INFO@RUE-MORGUE.COM

RECORDING OFFICER

FURTHER ACTION ☒

HOMICIDE ☐

EXPIRING MINDS

ON RUE MORGUE'S
SOCIAL MEDIA

If *Rue Morgue* were a horror movie character, who would it be?

Pinhead. Both are explorers in the further regions of experience.

COLIN BAXTER, VIA FACEBOOK

Ellen Ripley. Full of important facts, level-headed, sure of themselves, and by far the most badass of the crew.

@HEARTTHEDEAD, VIA TWITTER

Sidney Prescott. No matter how hard you try, you can't put her down.

@MADEYESJOJO, VIA TWITTER

Dr. Phibes. Who is under the mask, and what are their intentions?

@MICKBROOKS, VIA TWITTER

Lilly Colson from *Assassination Nation*. Kicking ass and taking names.

@BREWTALBATTLE, VIA TWITTER

The Female (Scarlett Johansson) in *Under the Skin*: sexy, more or less human, adaptable but ultimately flammable.

@ERIC_SUCHYTA, VIA TWITTER



FINAL WORDS

AS CAPTIONED BY YOU ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA



"TILT YOUR HEAD TO THE RIGHT, I'M NOT GETTING ANY RECEPTION. NO, MY RIGHT."

THIS MONTH'S CAPTION CONTEST WINNER IS
@VINCENT_WOLFRAM, VIA TWITTER

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for a chance to have your Final Words!



DECEASED

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2022

AUTOPSY

CASE NO.

1269351



THE MAN-EATING LIONS OF TSAVO

Stephen Hopkins' 1996 film *The Ghost and the Darkness*

leans more into action-thriller than horror, but it does put forth a truly horrifying premise: what if lions started killing people, not to eat, but just for the fun of it? While screenwriter William Goldman naturally took some liberties in conveying the real-life story about man-eating lions in the Tsavo River region of Kenya, much of what's known about these animals has already blurred the line between history and legend.

Goldman presumably took his inspiration from Lt. Colonel John Henry Patterson's book *The Man-Eaters of Tsavo*, published in 1907; a semi-autobiographical account of the author's experience supervising a railroad bridge construction that was terrorized by a pair of lions. Patterson, played by Val Kilmer in Hopkins' film adaptation, was forced to hunt down the animals as they dragged workers off to their deaths, leading his labourers to abandon the site. Killing the lions proved to be no easy feat, though, taking Patterson and twenty armed

men almost a month to bring them both down. News about the giant feline attacks travelled far and wide, compelling even the UK Prime Minister to address the issue with Parliament. With this kind of attention, tales of the incident became more sensationalized, starting with Patterson's own book that tallies the body count at well over one hundred people – a difficult figure to verify, given that British officials didn't bother keeping official counts of murdered African workers.

Of course, the most terrifying aspect of the whole affair was motive: since when did lions become such a visceral threat to human beings? While the idea that they were attacking for their own sadistic pleasure seems to come purely from William Goldman's imagination, conjecture ran wild until a 2001 review from natural historians Julian Kerbis Peterhans and Thomas Patrick Gnoske, who asserted that the attacks were due to some pretty simple conditions. An outbreak of rinderpest had depleted the buffalo and elephant populations in the area, and humans presented easier targets for the lions whose ability to hunt had



been hindered by a dental issue.

So while it's certainly more chilling to imagine lions on a violent rampage for kicks, Peterhans and Gnoske remind us that humans "represented little more than a vulnerable, slow moving, bipedal source of protein for the big cats." In other words, man-eating lions see us less as personal adversaries than convenient sources of protein. PowerBar, anyone?

BRYAN CHRISTOPHER

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

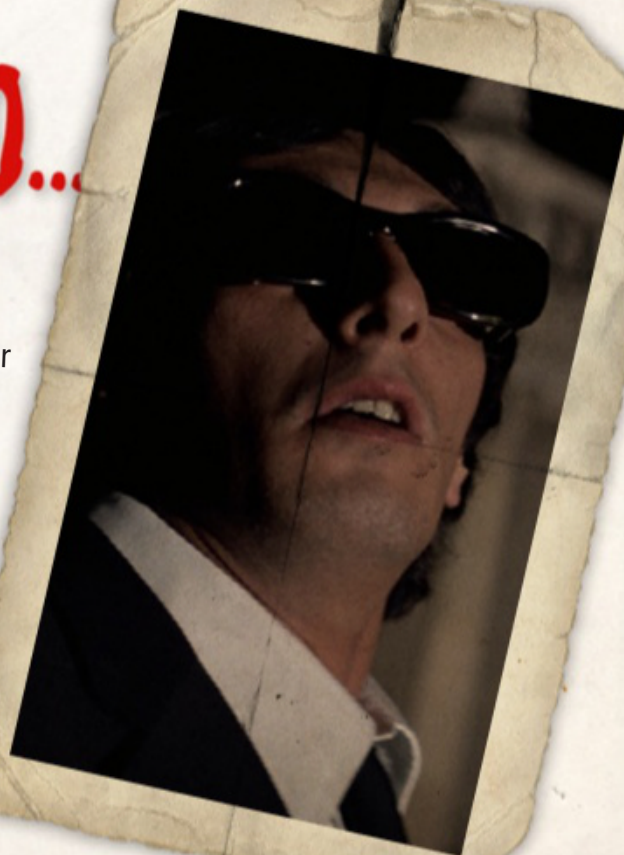
Flavio Bucci, Daniel from *Suspiria* (1977)

◀ One of the more memorable characters in Dario Argento's 1977 masterpiece is Daniel, the blind piano player who meets his end at the jaws of his own dog.

Born in 1947, renowned Italian actor Flavio Bucci was already a decade into his career when he landed the role. In addition to his movie work, he performed Italian dubbing for the likes of Sylvester Stallone and John Travolta, among others. A high point came when he co-starred in

the 2008 Cannes Award winner *Il Divo*. Despite squandering almost everything he earned on a self-described love of vodka and cocaine, Bucci worked steadily up until his death in 2020 from a heart attack in Passoscuro, Italy.

JAY CLARKE



NEEDFUL THINGS



1 CHUCKY CHIA PET \$19.99 USD

Ch-ch-ch-Chucky! The terracotta Chia Pet planters were an '80s sensation, not unlike the killer toy from the *Child's Play* franchise. Measuring 7 inches in height, this pottery planter is as duplicitous as the doll himself, featuring two sides to reflect either Chucky's innocent Good Guy face or his sinister, stitched-up smirk.

Walmart.com



2 MEDITATING BIGFOOT \$3.95 USD

Having been hunted for decades by ruthless paparazzi, we could all benefit from some of Bigfoot's zen. Available in brown, white, and tan, and measuring 2 inches tall, this mini soft vinyl figure will bring pure 'squatch serenity to your wilderness. Just nama-stay out of his woods!

Mcphee.com



3 COFFIN BUTTER DISH \$26.99 USD

You know what butters our bread? A ceramic coffin-shaped butter dish with a fitted skull-topped lid that keeps our favourite popcorn-topper cool and fresh. Dishwasher safe and sized to fit a single bar at a time, it's some much-needed creep factor for your countertop.

Wayfair.com



4 MOTORBIKE SKELETON HAND MIRRORS \$113.39-161.95 USD

Attention, speed demons: reflectors are a must for safety, so haunt your hog with these skeleton-hand mounts, gripping coffin-shaped mirrors! Available in three finishes and sold in pairs, they're adjustable at the wrist for that all-important realistic touch. Race with Death... and leave him in your dust!

Revzilla.com



5 HALLOWEEN III MINI MASKS \$60 USD for set of 3

Sorry (not sorry) to get that infernal jingle in your head again, but blame Fright Rags, not us! 'Tis the perfect season to celebrate horror's most controversial slasher sequel with a set of three mini-masks, none of them based on the visage of a Starfleet captain. Out this fall!

Fright-rags.com





CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

MARUMAMEDOU'S NODERABŌ

Tokyo-based freelance sculptor and cat-lover Ma-saaki Fukuda (a.k.a. Marumamedou) is relatively new to the resin horror collectibles scene, but his knowledge of Japanese ghost lore is deep. Drawing from literature and original illustrations of centuries-old figures of legend – such as the clawed, long-tongued Akashita of the Edo Period and the noderabō emerging from a broken temple bell, among others – Marumamedou offers finished products for sale as well as unassembled, unpainted garage kits, so collectors can further personalize these unique works of art.

INSPIRATION

“Making original figures with the *yokai* as a design is my lifework. There are many illustrations of yokai in old literature and based on that, I always put my personality into my yokai designs, which in turn give them a much more modern style.”

MATERIALS

Resin cast pieces, ten per garage kit

PRICE

¥10,000 (\$77 USD)

FIND IT

mamemarudou.jimdofree.com and on Instagram: [@marumame_dou](https://www.instagram.com/marumame_dou)

CHRIS HAMMOND



VINTAGE AND CLASSIC

HALLOWEEN JAPANESE SOUVENIR MOVIE PROGRAMME

(Joy Pack Film Presents, 1979)

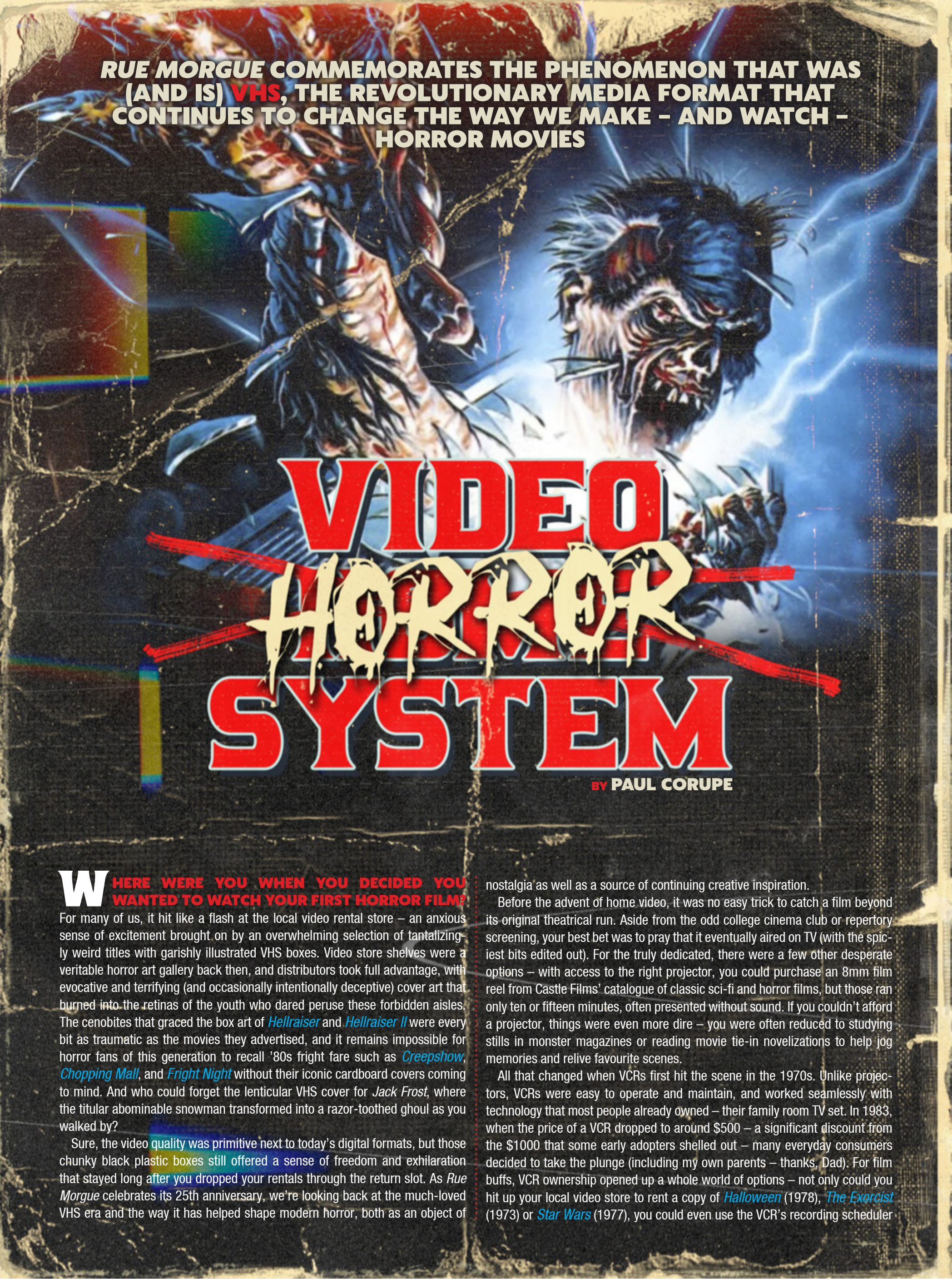
Following the U.S. box office success of John Carpenter's *Halloween* in the fall of 1978, other countries would have the opportunity to see the movie on theatre screens the following year. In the summer of 1979, Carpenter's classic was released to Japanese cinemas and, as is commonplace for many theatrical films exhibited in Japan, an *illustrated souvenir movie programme* was created and sold in cinemas. Measuring 8 X 11.5 inches, the beautifully designed sixteen-page booklet features numerous photos, cast and crew information (in Japanese text), and bios on Carpenter and stars Donald

Plesence and Jamie Lee Curtis. Eschewing the iconic “slashing jack-o'-lantern-knife” artwork of the U.S. one-sheet poster, the cover sports truly unique artwork of Michael Myers in an almost anime-style aesthetic, complete with large, bloodshot eyes. Brandishing a bloody, oversized butcher knife above a victim's head, a flash of lightning appears behind Michael's shoulder. The programme can often be found on eBay for \$40-\$60.

JAMES BURRELL

MORE CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES AT RUE-MORGUE.COM





RUE MORGUE COMMEMORATES THE PHENOMENON THAT WAS (AND IS) **VHS, THE REVOLUTIONARY MEDIA FORMAT THAT CONTINUES TO CHANGE THE WAY WE MAKE – AND WATCH – HORROR MOVIES**

VIDEO HORROR SYSTEM

BY PAUL CORUPE

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU DECIDED YOU WANTED TO WATCH YOUR FIRST HORROR FILM?

For many of us, it hit like a flash at the local video rental store – an anxious sense of excitement brought on by an overwhelming selection of tantalizingly weird titles with garishly illustrated VHS boxes. Video store shelves were a veritable horror art gallery back then, and distributors took full advantage, with evocative and terrifying (and occasionally intentionally deceptive) cover art that burned into the retinas of the youth who dared peruse these forbidden aisles. The cenobites that graced the box art of *Hellraiser* and *Hellraiser II* were every bit as traumatic as the movies they advertised, and it remains impossible for horror fans of this generation to recall '80s fright fare such as *Creepshow*, *Chopping Mall*, and *Fright Night* without their iconic cardboard covers coming to mind. And who could forget the lenticular VHS cover for *Jack Frost*, where the titular abominable snowman transformed into a razor-toothed ghoul as you walked by?

Sure, the video quality was primitive next to today's digital formats, but those chunky black plastic boxes still offered a sense of freedom and exhilaration that stayed long after you dropped your rentals through the return slot. As *Rue Morgue* celebrates its 25th anniversary, we're looking back at the much-loved VHS era and the way it has helped shape modern horror, both as an object of

nostalgia as well as a source of continuing creative inspiration.

Before the advent of home video, it was no easy trick to catch a film beyond its original theatrical run. Aside from the odd college cinema club or repertory screening, your best bet was to pray that it eventually aired on TV (with the spiciest bits edited out). For the truly dedicated, there were a few other desperate options – with access to the right projector, you could purchase an 8mm film reel from Castle Films' catalogue of classic sci-fi and horror films, but those ran only ten or fifteen minutes, often presented without sound. If you couldn't afford a projector, things were even more dire – you were often reduced to studying stills in monster magazines or reading movie tie-in novelizations to help jog memories and relive favourite scenes.

All that changed when VCRs first hit the scene in the 1970s. Unlike projectors, VCRs were easy to operate and maintain, and worked seamlessly with technology that most people already owned – their family room TV set. In 1983, when the price of a VCR dropped to around \$500 – a significant discount from the \$1000 that some early adopters shelled out – many everyday consumers decided to take the plunge (including my own parents – thanks, Dad). For film buffs, VCR ownership opened up a whole world of options – not only could you hit up your local video store to rent a copy of *Halloween* (1978), *The Exorcist* (1973) or *Star Wars* (1977), you could even use the VCR's recording scheduler

to tape TV airings of more offbeat films like *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Carnival of Souls* (1962), which usually only played after midnight. With the cheaper VHS technology poised to win out over the competing Betamax format and VHS rental stores popping up everywhere, VCRs became a standard fixture in most homes.

The home video industry's overnight popularity wasn't without controversy, though. Along with adult films, horror movies proved surprisingly lucrative for rental shops – and not just the usual Hollywood hits, but also new “straight to video” B-films and even older exploitation shockers by smaller distributors. Video store shelves were suddenly overflowing with a wide variety of horror movies, including grindhouse fare like 1978's *Faces of Death*, featuring VHS art that (falsely) boasted that it was banned in 46 countries. Following complaints from moral crusaders who believed that these kinds of graphic VHS releases could end up in the hands of children, the UK government soon set to work seizing and destroying “video nasties,” including *The Driller Killer* (1979), *Last House on the Left* (1972), and *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) among dozens of other films.

But the attempted ban didn't work quite as intended; for many, the UK's list of “obscene” horror videos simply became a checklist of must-see titles. In order to get their hands on these forbidden releases, collectors began to sell and trade taboo tapes by mail, creating an underground network that can be seen as an early forerunner of today's online horror communities. Tape trading was also popular in North America, as enthusiasts looked to obtain uncut versions of favourite films as well as obscure shockers from around the world. Sure, these grey-market copies were usually fifth or sixth generation dubs with fuzzy video and muffled soundtracks, but most were willing to overlook these imperfections for the chance to check out foreign genre flicks never before released in English-language markets.

Even brand-new VHS tapes may not have offered the most reliable experience, but dealing with the quirks and limitations of the technology proved to be as much of a ritual as actually watching the film. If you weren't rewinding a tape because the previous renter forgot to, you were probably fiddling with the tracking or rolling your eyes at another awkward “panning” shot that crudely captured the wider letterboxed image on your square cathode-ray tube TV. But, like a favourite T-shirt or a dog-eared paperback, everyone's most treasured tapes had a certain lived-in quality – the sticky spots on the cassette from peeled-off rental store stickers, the scrolling lines of static where memorable scenes were rewound and rewatched over and over again, and sometimes even audio/video drop outs where the brittle tape was spliced together after being mangled by dirty VCR tape heads.



It's because of this unconditional love that the legacy of the VHS format has only grown in the digital age. Tapes that once languished in previously viewed bins in the backs of video stores or in thrift stores are now bona fide film collectibles that continue to change hands for big bucks. This past spring, a vintage sealed VHS copy of *Back to the Future* (1985) sold for a shocking \$75,000. Even new horror films sometimes hit the format in special limited-edition releases that are snapped up by collectors on the lookout for rare items.

But even beyond its value as a nostalgia piece, VHS has become an important reference point for the horror genre, both as a plot device and for its low-tech analog aesthetic. Horror films tackled the moralistic anxiety over the VHS revolution as far back as *Videodrome* (1983) and *Video Violence* (1987), but the obsession has only grown since then, from the cursed VHS tape in *Ringu* (1998) and its sequels and remakes to the evil VHS board game in *Beyond the Gates* (2016). More recently, VHS played prominent roles in the video dating shocker *Rent-A-Pal* (2020) and *Censor* (2021), a video nasty period piece in which a woman thinks she sees her missing sister on a horror VHS tape submitted to the British ratings board.

Many modern films also directly reference VHS's sometimes dodgy quality, even incorpo-

rating scan lines and degraded video quality to trigger memories and heighten tension. With the rise in commercial-grade VHS camcorders in the 1980s, which largely replaced 8mm as the home movie medium of choice, mysteriously unearthed VHS tapes formed the basis for a new generation of found-footage films including *The McPherson Tape* (1989), *Ghostwatch* (1992), and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). Video tape artifacts are also used for effect in films like *VHS* (2012) and its sequels, as well as by the filmmakers behind 2013's *WNUF Halloween Special* [see p.18], who copied their VHS master multiple times to replicate the multi-generation dubs common in the tape-trading days.

Despite these loving tributes, the sad fact is that VHS tapes themselves likely won't be around forever. Although some collectors strongly believe in the longevity of the format, which has been known to outlast DVDs in some cases, archivists across the globe are hard at work digitizing analog video tapes to preserve their contents before they decay and become unplayable. As the images encoded into that magnetic tape inevitably fade away, it's up to us to preserve those memories of the way VHS allowed us to nurture and indulge our obsession with cinema's stranger side. So be kind and rewind – while you still can! 📼

PUTTING THE FORMAT'S ANALOG CHARMS FRONT AND CENTRE, BRAD MISKA'S **V/H/S** FRANCHISE CONTINUES WITH A NEW ENTRY OUT THIS FALL

TERROR

AT 30 FPS

BY WILLIAM J. WRIGHT

FOR FANS WHO HAVE DEVELOPED THEIR LOVE OF THE GENRE OVER THE LAST COUPLE OF DECADES, the idea of road-tripping to a neighbouring town to track down a VHS copy of *Nekromantik* or Lucio Fulci's *The Beyond* at a hole-in-the-wall video store is as quaint and outdated as rotary phones, eight tracks, and fountain pens. In the age of streaming and digital formats, they'll never know the sheer joy that came with scoring a fifth-generation bootleg copy of a rare horror film from a fellow collector or a shady convention floor dealer. But among the generation for whom VHS was an essential part of their burgeoning horror fandom stands one Brad Miska, who parlayed his love of horror and his relationship with the charmingly glitchy format into the wildly successful found-footage anthology franchise *V/H/S*. Comprising four

feature films and a new one, *V/H/S/99* (due on Shudder Oct 20), the franchise proved that "the vinyl of horror" is here to stay.

Few genre aficionados have the depth of insight into those pre-digital, pre-instant gratification days as Miska. Best known as the co-founder of Bloody Disgusting, Miska transitioned the genre news site to a successful indie movie studio in 2012 by gathering some of horror's most visionary filmmakers together for a project originally dubbed *The Bloody Disgusting Movie* (it was producer Roxanne Benjamin who would come up with the title *V/H/S*).

"At the time, we were with this company called The Collective," Miska tells *Rue Morgue*. "I was in a pitch meeting with them, talking about shit, and I was just kind of winging it. I just kind of talked about things I'd like to see... I wanted to do a series of found-footage shorts that we could

play into all the different tropes and play into all the horror tropes, not just VHS or fanboy tropes. I wanted to do a *Tales From the Crypt* but found footage. That was sort of the pitch. And they loved it.”

As the film went into development, the concept evolved into an anthology format where the viewer is invited into a horror fan’s basement collection full of old tapes, uncovering creepy home-shot footage documenting all manner of weirdness. From there, Miska seized the opportunity to focus on the unique emotional, psychological, and visceral response that watching a movie on VHS elicits.

“Obviously, when you go to a theatre, things have a cinematic feel,” he says. “VHS is ugly, and it ruins it. It makes [movies] look like shit, but [it also looks] the way we grew up watching it. [Today] some things are just too polished. Every ‘80s movie I own, I just prefer to watch it on VHS.”

He’s clearly not alone: 2012’s *V/H/S* anthology project was a breakout hit. Featuring segments by David Bruckner, Ti West, Glenn McQuaid, Joe Swanberg, and filmmaking collective Radio Silence – with a wraparound segment by Adam Wingard and Simon Barrett – *V/H/S* set a high bar for creativity that later entries would, at times, struggle to reach. Reframing the dead video format’s lo-fi characteristics as a decidedly grimy aesthetic, *V/H/S* sets the series’ trademark transgressive, voyeuristic tone through its wraparound narrative, “Tape 56,” directed by Wingard. In it, a criminal gang breaks into a house to find a corpse in front of several televisions, which display the segments to follow. Anchored by Bruckner’s unforgettable “Amateur Night” that would spawn the 2016 feature *Siren*, and Radio Silence’s off-the-rails Halloween tale “10/31/98,” this first entry redefined the found-footage subgenre by recontextualizing tired tropes and proving that sometimes, shorter is better.

“Adam and Simon’s ‘Tape 56’ wraparound is like the birth of the visual concept of what *V/H/S* is, and I love that about it,” says Miska. “People focus on the segments, but to me, there are no segments without [the wraparounds] because we use those to show people the aesthetic.”

A follow-up was inevitable, and *V/H/S/2* was rushed into production almost immediately. Debuting at Sundance in 2013, *V/H/S/2* refines the original’s concept while sanding off some of the



A Compendium Of Creeps: *V/H/S* and its sequels reframe the dead video format’s lo-fi characteristics as a decidedly grimy aesthetic.

initial entry’s rough edges. Regarded by fans and critics alike as the series’ best entry, *V/H/S/2* clocks in at an economical 92 minutes, bringing in the scares quickly while avoiding the first film’s bloat. Wingard and Barrett return to the fold alongside a roster of filmmakers that includes Jason Eisener, Gareth Evans, and Timo Tjahjanto. Found-footage godfathers Gregg Hale and Eduardo Sánchez, the producer and co-director of *The Blair Witch Project*, also contribute. By far, the strongest segment in the sequel is Tjahjanto’s “Safe Haven,” in which a documentary crew’s investigation of a Jim Jones-esque cult leader’s compound has terrifying consequences. Although “Safe Haven” would become a bench-

mark for the franchise, Miska cites “Slumber Party Alien Abduction,” directed and co-written by Eisener (*Hobo With a Shotgun*), as a personal favourite.

“When we saw the first cut of that, my wife cried – because she thought the dog died,” Miska recalls. “But the fact that it struck an emotion with her made me really excited. I remember being like, ‘Holy shit! We made something special if it made my wife cry.’”

For the third entry in the series, Miska opted to focus the anthology on a particular theme that was dominating discussions of modern media: the emergence of influencers and online celebrity. Released on demand and later in theatres in the fall of 2014, *V/H/S: Viral* didn’t resonate as strongly with fans but contains some genuinely frightening segments, the best of which is Nacho Vigalondo’s “Parallel Monsters,” a heady blend of sci-fi and the supernatural that finds a hapless inventor opening a doorway to a demonic alternate reality. Gregg Bishop’s “Dante the Great,” is a dark fantasy about a struggling illusionist who discovers a cursed cloak that grants him real magical powers, while Justin Benson and Aaron Moorhead’s “Bonestorm” plays out like *Camp Kill Yourself* meets *Evil Dead*. Despite his enthusiasm for all of the films in the franchise, the poor performance of *V/H/S: Viral* remains a sore spot for Miska.

“The hate on *Viral* irritates the hell out of me,” he says. “I feel like maybe if there was one more segment, people would have liked it more. The first one was too long. The second one was perfect, and then with *Viral*, we went even shorter, and then, it just kind of felt like it was incomplete. I think maybe that’s what bothered people about it. But the venom for *Viral* irritates me because I don’t get it.”

The fourth film in the franchise, *V/H/S/94*, released in 2021 after a seven-year hiatus, was a return to form. Featuring a frame narrative (“Holy Hell,” directed by Jennifer Reeder) that evokes David Cronenberg’s *Videodrome* (“The signal is the stimulant. The signal is the sedative. The signal is salvation”), this ostensible reboot is a smorgasbord of genre tropes in the now-established patented *V/H/S* style. A TV reporter comes face-to-face



"THERE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT GETTING A FILM ON VHS BACK IN THE 1990s BEFORE DVD, BECAUSE YOU HAD TO WAIT TO GET IT."

V/H/S/ FRANCHISE CREATOR BRAD MISKA



with a subterranean rat god in Chloe Okuno's "Storm Drain," while "The Empty Wake," directed by Barrett, sees a new funeral home employee riding out a tornado with the unquiet dead. The standout, however, is Ryan Prows' "Nightmare," a timely tale of a right-wing militia that plans to weaponize a vampire's blood.

Debuting on the festival circuit before finding a home on Shudder, *V/H/S/94* would become the streaming service's biggest premiere, drawing an unprecedented number of viewers. Still, it presented unique challenges for Miska and company.

"*V/H/S/94* was very hard because we wanted to try and go union, which jacks up fees and costs," he notes. "And everyone had sort of been through the wringer before, worked for free [and] made no money. It's just like anything else when you burn your favours; you can't run back to the same people, asking for them to do everything for free anymore. They're all busy doing other shit because everybody's been growing. That kind of happened with *V/H/S*. So Shudder was cool, and they took a swing on it, like, 'Okay, we'll give you what you need to go do it.'"

For *V/H/S/99*, Miska hopes to push the franchise in new and exciting directions while still tapping that rich vein of '90s nostalgia. Featuring a new lineup of filmmakers that includes Maggie Levin (*Into the Dark's* "My Valentine" episode), Johannes Roberts (*47 Meters Down*), Flying Lotus (*Kuso*), Tyler MacIntyre (*Tragedy*



Girls), and Vanessa and Joseph Winter (*Deadstream*), *V/H/S/99* looks at Y2K paranoia. With a wraparound about a thirsty teenager's home video that leads to a series of horrifying revelations, the film harkens back to the VHS format's waning days with a vibe that draws heavily from popular 1990s teen comedies.

"With *V/H/S/99*, we kind of relocated to suburbia for a little bit of that *American Pie* [feel]," he reveals. "We explore the fear of the future. We ask the question, is the world going to hell? You know, Y2K — all that kind of stuff. It was fun. It was like the glory days."

Looking back, Miska admits that the love of the hunt often outweighed the merits of the prize. Despite the advent of superior home

S-V/H/S: Miska pitched his franchise as a series of found-footage shorts that could play into different horror movie tropes.

formats, VHS has become a totem of a bygone era, and the *V/H/S* franchise continues its legacy as its poster child. The medium is still the message, but for Miska, the message has changed.

"There was something special about getting a film on VHS back in the 1990s before DVD, because you had to wait to get it," he notes. "There's no anticipation anymore, and everything is available instantly at your fingertips. Back in the '90s, after a movie hit theatres, you had to wait for Blockbuster to carry the film before it would land on the used rack and eventually find its way to retail for \$19.99. I think this is why we cherish older films — and the format — while modern cinema is mostly forgettable. It's also why I love playing in the *V/H/S* sandbox." 📀



L.A.'S ONGOING INTERACTIVE VHS ART EXHIBIT, **SLASHBACK VIDEO**, KEEPS THE VINTAGE NOSTALGIA ALIVE

RETURN TO VHS HORROR!

BY BRYAN CHRISTOPHER

IN SO FAR AS THE BLUE-AND-YELLOW BLOCKBUSTER BOX HAS BECOME AN EMBLEM OF THE VIDEO STORE DAYS OF YORE, many of us remember the mom-and-pop shops that came before the massive home video chain – independent locales where the staff were as passionate about outsider cinema as the patrons who browsed their aisles. Oftentimes, these locally owned and operated shops offered fright fare the big chains could not, with dedicated horror sections festooned with the sort of promo items that are now the stuff of collector dreams: neon signs, first-run posters, and life-size cardboard cut-outs of Freddy Krueger and his ilk.

That's exactly the kind of nostalgic magic that Ryan and Ciara Turek looked to recreate when they collaborated with Kiko Bailey and Erick Wessel of L.A.'s Mystic Museum to open the Slashback Video exhibit in 2017. Described by Ciara as "part museum, part immersive/experiential space, part photo op, and part art gallery wrapped in a whole lot of nostalgia, horror, and love," the concept started with a wistful discussion among friends, lamenting that this sense of wonder and discovery might be lost on horror fans of today.

So they put the word out to fellow genre fiends to start amassing a collection of classic horror VHS tapes, and they soon gathered boxes of titles that they curated to develop the appropriate experience, from fan favourites like the *Halloween* franchise, *Child's Play*, and *Phantasm* to deeper cuts such as *Stage Fright*, *Three on a Meathook*, and even *Linnea Quigley's Horror Workout*.

"We put in a mix of well-known nostalgia with some hidden gems," explains Bailey, whose Mystic Museum store on L.A.'s horror haven of Magnolia Blvd is packed with spooky housewares, merch, and oddi-

ties. "It was very important to us to have the spectrum range from cult classics to fan favourites and deep cuts."

But the exhibit isn't just the films themselves. Slashback Video offers a modernized experience of the vintage video store, with a "New Releases" section where contributing artists have reimagined newer films with retro horror covers or even created original VHS-themed artwork for movies that never existed (but could have). Illustrator Zachary Jackson Brown worked up a new (but appropriately distressed) slipcover for *Scream*, for example, while Christopher Velasquez contributes cheeky mash-up art of *Hellraiser* with *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*.

Alas, the video cassettes that populate the wire shelves of the exhibit aren't for sale – Slashback's aim is to provide an immersive environment for patrons to stroll down memory lane, take a few selfies, and interact with the technology of the bygone analog era. From its original iteration to its "sequels" (cheekily titled *Revenge of Slashback Video* and *Slashback Video: The Beginning*), the exhibit's retro charms continue to evolve, expanding from '80s genre fare to the nostalgia of the '90s with laser discs, retro candy and soda, light-up signage, and video games, including real vintage consoles that you can actually play on site.

But be warned: the premises are guarded by the sinister mascot Tapehead, designed by Devon Whitehead, who sports a VHS cassette as a mask.

"Tapehead isn't only Slashback's mascot," says Wessel, "he's incorporated in a lot of the immersive aspects of the exhibit and is the central character in the fun narrative that we've woven into the show. You can always find him haunting the aisles!"



AS THE SANDS OF TIME PULL THE '90s INTO THE REALM OF RETRO,
AN ALL-NEW FILM FROM THE MAD MIND BEHIND 2013'S
WNUF HALLOWEEN SPECIAL HITS ALL THE RIGHT MARKS



VHS RETRO RIOT

BY DAKOTA DAHL

THE YEAR WAS 2013, AND WE WERE JUST FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM THE '80s TO MISS THEM.

The movies of the era endured, but what of those hammy TV station specials we recorded with our VCRs? To fill this aching void came Chris LaMartina with his experimental yet delightful *WNUF Halloween Special*, a fictionalized VHS recording of the titular local station, complete with faux commercials for imagined products that were just silly enough to be believable. It was grainy, it was weird, it was barely a movie, but it quickly became essential Halloween viewing for the Gen-X nostalgics. Now, LaMartina is back with *Out There Halloween Megatape*, a loose sequel to *WNUF* that affectionately lampoons the decade that followed; an homage to '90s boob tube culture with equal parts comedy, satire, and a cheeky sense of retro wistfulness, all wrapped in the conceit of another disastrous live TV show.

Filed as a VHS-dubbed recording of a 1987 Halloween TV special, *WNUF* concerns local television personality Frank Stewart (Paul Fahrenkopf) as he hosts a live broadcast of a seance in a haunted house and its disastrous but oddly unpredictable outcome. But it was the vintage ads and VHS blips around that narrative that struck the perfect chord of '80s nostalgia, with hilariously banal promo spots for local businesses, TV personalities that remind one of the likes of Gerardo Rivera and Sally Jessy Raphael, and enough outdated commercials to shake a Betamax at.

For *Megatape*, we return to River Hill Township's local television station for a spooky-ooky (and appropriately cheesy) Halloween special called *Out There* – a clear riff on the shows like *Unsolved Mysteries* and *Beyond Belief* that dominated the prime time slots of the era. Featuring Ivy Sparks (Melissa LaMartina, the filmmaker's wife and co-producer), a Ricki Lake-esque talk show host hoping to leave all that daytime drama in the dust of her career, sharing hosting duties with TV personality Tate Dawson (frequent LaMartina collaborator Dave Gamble), *Out There* promises an in-depth exposé on the town's

local cult, The Temple of Divine Purity, who await the return of an alien race to bring about their judgment day. The story is mostly new, but echoes of the events of *WNUF* linger through-

out, with cleverly placed call-backs and updates on its most memorable characters (some of whom have fallen from grace and/or sanity), ever maintaining that the events of the prior film really

happened. It's an earnest love-letter to the childhood TV of the '90s kids, with nods to the Satanic Panic craze and a macabre twist ending that delivers what we never dared hope for at the time: a live broadcast gone horribly and hilariously wrong.

Directed and co-written by LaMartina, who



Halloween Megatape: The *WNUF* sequel is an homage to '90s boob tube culture equal parts comedy, satire, and a cheeky sense of retro wistfulness.

has lensed prior cheeky horror comedies such as *Grave Mistakes* (2008) and *President's Day* (2010), *Megatape* perfectly captures what childhood was like for that latchkey kid generation, those raised by *Knight Rider* rather than their working-class parents. Conceived and shot in complete secrecy, LaMartina funded the sequel with the help of a committed fandom who pitched in over \$35,000 via a GoFundMe campaign that promised perks of unique fictional items and collectibles in line with *WNUF*'s own tongue-in-cheek brand of nostalgia.

With the spooky black cat out of the trick-or-treating bag, *Rue Morgue* spoke with LaMartina

about keeping the childhood Halloween spirit alive.

It's such great news that you've made another WNUF film! What called you back to the format?

In my heart, it's always October; just days after finishing the final cut of the original *WNUF Halloween Special* back in 2013, my brain kept coming back to it. Like most horror fans, I want every day to be Halloween, and I'd fallen deeply in love with the idea of telling a story through faux archival content. Even back then, I knew I would venture back to River Hill township. In

2015, I started wondering what a follow-up might feel like. I knew it would be more of a spiritual sequel rather than a straight continuation of the story, but I didn't want to repeat myself. So I pondered: if I were to fast forward a decade, what would that TV station be like? What would River Hill township be like? What would Halloween be like? The answers to those questions evolved into the *Out There Halloween Mega Tape* (a.k.a. the *WNUF Halloween Sequel*).

What are some of your own personal memories of local TV that helped influence how you shaped the film?

Back in the '90s, flipping channels was like a low-risk game of Russian roulette, but during October, the odds were always in our favour. From monster movie marathons to spooky ad spots, it was the best time to avoid your chores – and I'm serious when I tell you I watched ad breaks with baited breath, just in case we got served something like a zombies in a pizza joint promo or a hokey haunted house, sponsored by the station. The sequel has all the kitschy commercials you'd expect, but its main framework is much more driven by the era's evolving obsession with the occult. By the mid-'90s, the Satanic Panic of the 1980s had slowed, and paranormal research shows like *Sightings* and *Mysteries, Magic, and Miracles* flourished. I loved those series, and they were a driving force as I set out to make a Halloween movie set in the '90s.

What is it about local television stations from the '80s and '90s that inspires you the most?

I'm a big fan of blatant localism and the inherent world-building that exists when something is made solely for a regional audience, but within the sequel, that's a point of conflict. The '90s mark a turning point in television. In the United States, there was large-scale deregulation of media ownership with tons of tiny TV stations being bought up by



big corporate parent companies. In *WNUF 2*, that means that once-regional TV-28 is turned into an affiliate of the big, sexy ACE network, and the need for increased ad revenue drives the over-the-top trashy tabloid angle guiding the larger narrative.

You've said that you're interested in world-building; this can be seen in the perks that your financial backers received. What are some of the different mediums you used to help build this universe?

The whole conceit this time is that the film you're watching is actually a compilation video released by

Trader Tony's Tape Dungeon, a [fictional] bootleg operation that sold out-of-print and hard-to-find titles back in the 1990s. During the height of COVID, I actually hunkered down and wrote a whole 350+ title catalogue of fake movies you could get from Trader Tony back in the day. Some of the fine folks who backed our crowd-source campaign at the VHS [tier] received those insane photocopied catalogs with their rewards.

The DVD even has an in-world commentary from Trader Tony himself. In addition to the Tape Dungeon catalogue, certain backer levels also received albums on CDs and whole goddamn novels based on products mentioned in the film.

Many familiar faces and places from the first WNUF Halloween Special are peppered throughout the sequel. Is that kind of interconnectedness difficult to keep track of?

When I was writing it, I was constantly checking the original as well as the liner notes from the *WNUF* sequel/prequel spoken word album that Terror Vision Records put out in 2015. So much of what became the *WNUF* mythos was written as little throwaway details, but with a follow-up film, continuity was everything. Hence, station manager Wally Cohen is now an on-screen persona, we meet the matriarch of High Pike Farm, and we show artwork for some of the Bergers' books [from the film], like *Rusty Moon: The Junkyard Werewolf of Flint, Michigan*.





Degeneration Station: In the spirit of authenticity, the final cut of the film was transferred and re-transferred to VHS several times. "There is nothing that completely emulates the look of VHS like VHS," says writer/director Chris LaMartina.

You've said that *Out There Halloween Megatape* isn't easily classified in a genre, so how would you best describe it?

Years ago, an early review of *WNUF Halloween Special* said it wasn't so much a film as it was an experience and that always stuck with me. Frankly, it made me want to make experiences more than movies. I'd still call it a Halloween movie. While there's certainly some horrific things in it, it's not horror in the sense in which the original vamps on haunted house tropes. Maybe the way to best describe it is an outsider art genre movie. Does that sound too pretentious? Maybe I should mention all the Clint Howard references instead.

What is casting like when seeking actors that can accurately portray that very specific tone of old local television?

Casting Dracula for a toothpaste ad and finding the right actor to play a sombre station manager are vastly different endeavours, but within the sequel, there was such a wide range of nuanced performances, especially from commercials to main shows. I was blessed this time around to have my wife Melissa co-producing, and her

background in Baltimore's theatre scene guided our process.

Both WNUF movies do a tremendous job of capturing a very tangible, organic vibe of a TV channel being taped on VHS. What does it take in both production and post-production to give it that feel?

As anyone who grew up trading tapes knows, degeneration is a real thing when you're bouncing tapes between VCRs. While there's software now that can get you pretty close to that look, there is nothing that completely emulates the look of VHS like VHS. So, in the spirit of authenticity, the final cut of the film was transferred and re-transferred to VHS a few times before I settled on a look that was shitty enough to feel real, but not so shitty it's unwatchable.

Without giving too much away, what was your favourite scene to film, and why?

Filming our afternoon talk show with a live studio audience full of Halloween-costumed cast members was a total blast, but the horror-themed commercials probably were the most fun to execute. The ones that immediately come to mind are filming the slimy hand puppets for our

Ghoulies knock-off, The Bogies ("They might be tiny, but the terror is huge when mini-monsters invade a miniature golf course!"). Transforming our basement into Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory for a light beer ad was equally absurd. If you turned the camera 45 degrees, you would have seen our washer and dryer.

How do you predict audiences will respond to *Out There Halloween Megatape*?

As a storyteller, expectation is your enemy. I can't be certain what audiences are expecting, but I don't think it's what I'm delivering. I had no intentions of rehashing a '90s version of the original story. While the sequel is decidedly not that, it's the movie I wanted to make. I'm proud of it, and I'm confident that this flick will find the audience it was made for.

What's next for the WNUF cinematic universe?

I have an idea for a third one to round out the trilogy; it would take place in 2004 and lean into that era's infatuation with reality-TV culture set against the Iraq War in post 9/11 America. I've been calling it *Celebrity Exorcism*, but I haven't been possessed to start on it yet. After working on part two for a half decade, my plan is to step back, recharge my batteries, and work on a couple of brand-new projects. So stay tuned! 🖤

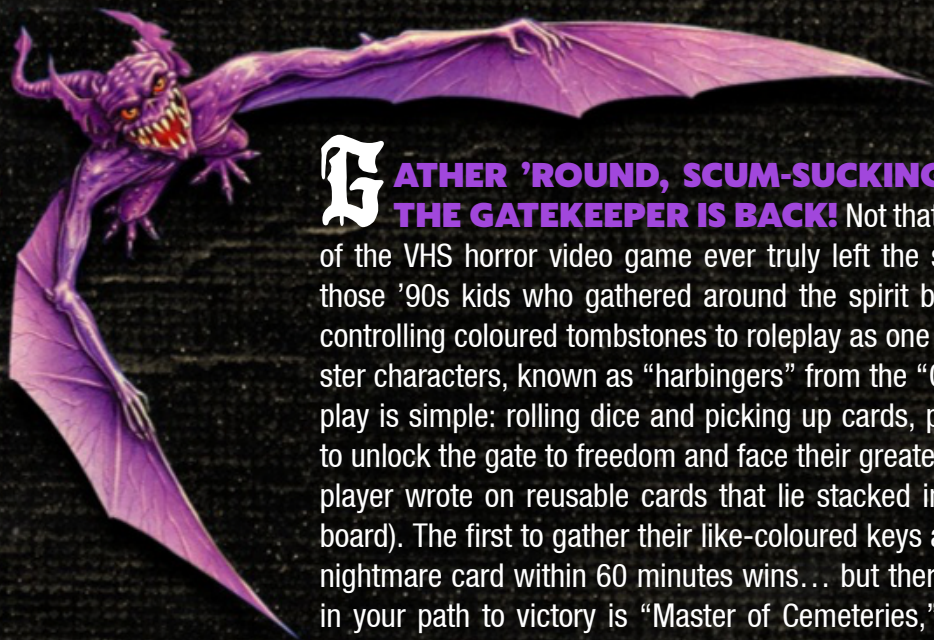


ATMOSFEAR, THE WORLD'S FIRST VIDEO BOARD GAME SENSATION GREET'S FANS, NEW AND OLD, FOR ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY RESTORATION

RETURN OF A TRUE NIGHTMARE

BY ANDREA SUBISSATI





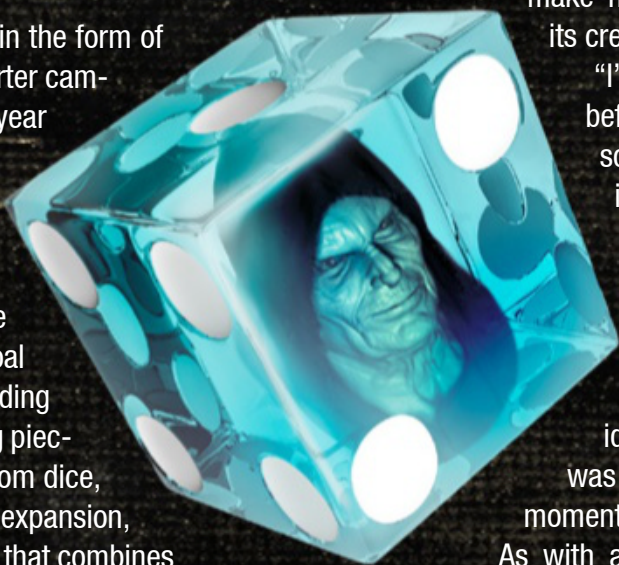
GATHER 'ROUND, SCUM-SUCKING MAGGOTS – THE GATEKEEPER IS BACK!

Not that the esteemed host of the VHS horror video game ever truly left the scarred psyches of those '90s kids who gathered around the spirit board of *Atmosfear*, controlling coloured tombstones to roleplay as one of six classic monster characters, known as “harbingers” from the “Other Side.” Gameplay is simple: rolling dice and picking up cards, players collect keys to unlock the gate to freedom and face their greatest fear (which each player wrote on reusable cards that lie stacked in the centre of the board). The first to gather their like-coloured keys and draw their own nightmare card within 60 minutes wins... but there's more. Standing in your path to victory is “Master of Cemeteries,” the sinister Gatekeeper, his hooded face looming on a nearby TV screen, playing on the game's accompanying VHS tape. Hurling insults while instigating the occasional interactive mini-game, the Gatekeeper demands players' utmost attention and reverence – ignoring him could cost you the game... or worse!

It should sound familiar – if not by the name *Atmosfear* then by its original title *Nightmare*, which was changed due to its perceived similarity to Mindscape's 1991 PC game *Nightmare*. Aside from being a global sensation that revolutionized parlour games upon its launch in September of 1991, *Atmosfear* spawned a legion of sequels as well as fans, and is now being reissued in a deluxe 30th anniversary edition by one of its two original creators, Phillip Tanner.

“Nostalgia is obviously popular when you look at shows like *Stranger Things*,” says Tanner, reflecting on the game's incredible longevity. “You just realize that people love that era and because [*Atmosfear*] was the first of its kind, 30 years seems to be pretty good timing [for a revival]. There was a lot of interest when we [announced] what the plan is, so I think it just seems like the perfect time.”

That plan hit fans in the form of an elaborate Kickstarter campaign launched last year that offered backers the opportunity to pre-order a refurbished version of the original game along with stretch goal incentives, including new sculpted playing pieces, extra cards, custom dice, the Baron Samedi expansion, and a Deluxe Edition that combines the whole mausoleum of goodies. The wildly successful campaign literally quadrupled its stated goal of AU\$90,000, and everything



ships out in December 2022, just in time for Krampusnacht.

Three decades ago, Tanner created the game with his friend and collaborator Brett Clements; the pair had worked together as reporters for the Australian children's TV series *Simon Townsend's Wonder World!* and were considering getting into filmmaking. Having launched a successful Australian trivia board game in 1984 called *Oz Quiz* (packaged in a novelty Aussie beer cooler pack known as an “esky”), Clements proposed that they merge their TV production skills with the board game format he had already mastered. The first game of its kind with VHS integration, *Atmosfear* was poised to make history, unbeknownst to its creators.

“I'd never done board games before,” admits Tanner. “We sort of knew this was a great idea; it hadn't been done before, it's silly, it's fun, it's spooky, it had all of the fun parts of what a board game should be. We talked about what the original idea for *Atmosfear* was and it was like one of those light bulb moments.”

As with all great ideas, the road to development was a long and arduous one. Aware that the strength of the game was largely in its novel gimmick of VHS video interactivity,



Tanner and Clements realized the importance of a strong, charismatic host to hit all the right marks. To that end, Tanner reached out to his own agent who suggested the Polish actor Wenanty Nosul, who had entered the public consciousness after appearing in an oddly provocative *ad for Guinness beer*. (Must be seen to be believed – look it up on YouTube.)

“Guinness had this series of incredibly weird ads – they were so wonderfully weird that everybody knew them,” says Tanner. “In [Nosul's ad], there's this glass of Guinness as it fills up – the beauty of Guinness is that when it fills up, it has wonderful texture and it just looks amazing – so as the beer is filling up, he's sitting there beside it, just looking at it, and then he turns to the camera and says [in a deep, suggestive voice], ‘I like to watch.’ As soon as the agent said ‘this actor is on our books,’ I said, ‘We have to see this guy!’”

Nosul's turn as the Gatekeeper, whose neon-lit face ages and disintegrates as the game wears on, was nothing short of iconic. Now a frequent guest at European horror conventions, Nosul traumatized and delighted a generation of players with his friendly bullying, berating players as “maggots” and punishing them for not responding to him in time, or with the required response of “Yes, my Gatekeeper!”

“We met Wenanty and that ability to really deliver the lines with fantastic nuance and humour with that full voice of his,” recalls Tanner. “When he yells ‘Stop!’ you literally get thrown off the

back of the chair, he just nailed it. And he also had the accent – we wanted a sort of Eastern European accent, but we wanted a real one as well, so the fact that he was able to come in with this range was just brilliant.”

Shooting the video accompaniment was tricky, as Nosul had to deliver his bits within strict pre-determined time frames in order to make the game work. But work it did, and with the heavy lifting of production done, Tanner and Clements turned their attention to the distribution end of things. Fortunately for them, the game (or perhaps, more accurately, the Gatekeeper) spoke for itself. Joining forces with Village Roadshow, the makers set up a unique pitch for Kmart stores; renting and staging a haunted house environment with lights turned low and stereo sound cranked up – way up.

“[We said] ‘Give us an hour of your time and let us pitch this new game that we’ve got,’” recalls Tanner, noting that the game’s easy-to-learn play style and firm start-to-finish timeline of an hour was a boon for the pitching process. “In Australia, at that stage, if you managed to sell 5000 units of a game, that was pretty good. We walked out of that first meeting and Kmart had agreed to buy and stock 13,000 units for that Christmas.”

Atmosfear’s cemetery fog spread like hellfire from there, thanks in part to a massive ad cam-

“WE GOT A LETTER FROM THE GERMANS – LITERALLY, THE STATE – SAYING, ‘THIS GAME IS NOT GOOD, IT’S RUINING PEOPLE’S PSYCHES.’”

ATMOSFEAR CO-CREATOR PHILIP TANNER

paign that put trailers for the game in front of PG theatrical screenings and VHS tapes of movies distributed by the company. Village Roadshow made good on their name by taking the game global: by 1993, *Atmosfear* was licensed to seventeen countries (recreated with custom videos in 7 different languages), had amassed several board game awards worldwide, and remains the most successful advance-sale board game campaign of all time.

But of course, like all things horror, *Atmosfear*’s popularity wasn’t without its moral detractors, who feared its dark influence on impressionable youth. The VHS portion of the game had to be rated like any other video release, so while the box read “Ages 12 and up,” the tape itself was rated PG. Tanner notes that the loudest complaint didn’t come from a concerned parent or a righteous religious group, but from an entire country’s government.

“We got a letter from the Germans – literally, the state – saying, ‘This game is not good, it’s ruining people’s psyches. Germans don’t like being yelled at.’ And we went, ‘You know, this is



just a board game. It’s not real, folks.”

Thankfully, many more relished being yelled at by an oddball actor in a cloak on a VHS tape, and although sales dwindled throughout *Atmosfear*’s many subsequent sequels and expansion packs, a devoted cult fandom endures, with some going so far as to create their own video accompaniments for the game and sharing them with fellow maggots on YouTube.

“It’s brilliant, what can you say?” enthuses Tanner. “I just think how amazing it is that people would take the time and effort to do that. I know how difficult it is to do those things and they’ve gone all the way: they’ve got makeup, they’ve got the sound [quality], the whole works. It’s quite extraordinary.”

Tanner remains delighted at the enthusiasm that endures for *Atmosfear*, and designed the Deluxe Edition with hardcore players in mind. Admitting that the playing pieces for the original game were on the simple side, he’s most excited about the addition of detailed, beautifully sculpted tombstones bearing the likeness of the characters they represent, based on classic monsters and real figures from horror history: Elizabeth Bathory, Khufu the mummy, the witch Anne de Chantaine, Gevaudan the werewolf, and the voodoo priest Baron Samedi among them. Tanner’s personal favourite is the one character invented purely for the world of *Atmosfear*: Hellin, the poltergeist. (“Something about her... is nasty, let’s just put it that way.”)

Further back stories on all these characters, including the Gatekeeper and the entire universe of the mysterious Other Side in which they dwell, will be explored in an all-new graphic novel series *The Lore of the Other Side*. The first edition, written by Tanner and Geoff Watson and illustrated by Bulgarian artist Ivalyo Evans, is offered as an additional Kickstarter perk for the 30th Anniversary edition, and Tanner intends to continue the series with more entries to come.

“The one thing that we never really did was go into the history of where the Gatekeeper came from,” he says. “[*The Lore of the Other Side*] is a bit of an exploration in terms of where the Gatekeeper came from – what his specific back story was, why he ended up on the Other Side and what he does.”

After 30 years of seeing *Atmosfear* go from indie board game experiment to international sensation (including a sold-out *Atmosfear* Halloween party at Australia’s Wonderland theme park, where Wenanty Nosul appeared in person to deliver The Gatekeeper’s most memorable lines between band and DJ sets), Tanner remains humbled by the game’s continuing success and grateful to the worldwide legion of fans who keep *Atmosfear* alive in their hearts.

“Somebody [once] explained it like, ‘You’ve lit the candle, now you just got to hold on to the rocket and see what happens,’” he says. “That was this trajectory of this thing. It was the most extraordinary time.” 🍀

DC
HORROR
PRESENTS

How do you kill an army of zombie Nazis?
It's a big pain in the @&\$#!

SGT ROCK

VS. THE ARMY OF THE DEAD

TM & © DC

The horror icon teams with
the legendary *100 Bullets*
artist to tell a terror-soaked
tale like no other!

Written by
BRUCE CAMPBELL

Art by
EDUARDO RISSO

Cover by
GARY FRANK



6 issues
September

WHILE THE GOLDEN AGE OF MUSIC VIDEOS MAY LIE IN THE HEYDAY OF MTV, THAT'S NOT TO SAY THAT THE ART OF THE MUSIC VIDEO EVER DIED. IN MANY RESPECTS IT ONLY GOT MORE DARING AND AMBITIOUS. TO PROVE OUR POINT, WE REACH BACK TO 1997, THE YEAR THIS MAGAZINE WAS BORN, TO BRING YOU...

RUE  MORGUE'S

25 GHASTLIEST MUSIC VIDEOS OF THE PAST 25 YEARS

REVIEWS BY BENOIT BLACK, DEIRDRE CRIMMINS, HATE MIOR, JAY CLARKE, JOSE CRUZ, RYAN COLEMAN, SEAN KELLY, SEAN PLUMMER, ROCCO T. THOMPSON, AND WILLIAM J. WRIGHT

NATURALLY

Tinashe (2022)

Forsaking the tulle and lace of Britney's slumber party for a down-home nightmare, Tinashe pays broad homage to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in this slick, sanguine cut from her independently produced 333 album. Directed by Raul Rosco Guerrero, "Naturally" sees the alternative R&B songstress swinging a cleaver and giggling through mouthfuls of fruit (or is it flesh?) between boot-clad dance breaks. As she sings to rekindle an erotic connection so deep it penetrates skin, meat, and bone, Tinashe makes it clear that she's the kind of gal who will always get her Marilyn Burns moment... and her (wo)man. **RTT**



ZICK ZACK

Rammstein (2022)

No one would ever accuse Rammstein of being subtle, and the group stays true to form with its 2022 video for "Zick Zack." The colourful clip features the band members heavily made up as cosmetic surgery-loving hair rockers playing to an audience of rambunctious geriatrics when the performance goes off the rails; lead singer Till Lindemann's heavily Botoxed face starts sliding off, so he resorts to tape and staples to keep it in place. Titled after German onomatopoeia for the sound of scissors (the equivalent to "snip, snip"), it's a pretty on-the-nose jab at popular culture superficiality, though a grotesquely entertaining one. **SP**

VERY NOISE

Igorrr (2020)

Thanks to French musician Gautier Serre (better known as Igorrr) and the demented animators of MeatDept., we now know what would happen if the technicians from DreamWorks partnered with the bad brains at Adult Swim. This bonkers short – which gave slack-jawed music YouTubers reaction video fodder for weeks – pairs the slick computer animation of the former with the unabashed surrealism of the latter by imagining a chewing gum-amoeba from another world that smashes skyscrapers (when it isn't breakdancing) while a bemused office worker looks on. His head turns into a meteor. An old geezer rides a motorcycle across the ocean. Nothing makes sense. Everything works. **JC**



ACH SO GERN (ONE SHOT VIDEO)

Lindemann (2020)

Better known as the vocalist for German rockers Rammstein, Till Lindemann has followed in the monster footsteps of his main band's penchant for high-concept horror-tinged music videos, making it hard for us to choose just one. For the song "Ach So Gern," Lindemann released a trio of videos, but it's this bare-bones version – shot in one long take – that hits the high mark on raw brutality. Directed by frequent collaborator Zoran Bihac, the video presents a protracted interrogation sequence in a prison camp in the dead of winter. Lindemann, outfitted as a flamboyant aristocrat with a crooked smile, is submitted to a litany of mounting violence – slapping, punching, kicking, battery – as the camera unflinchingly looks on and the merry singsong comes to its bleak conclusion. Not for weak stomachs and definitely NSFW! **BB**



LEATHER TEETH

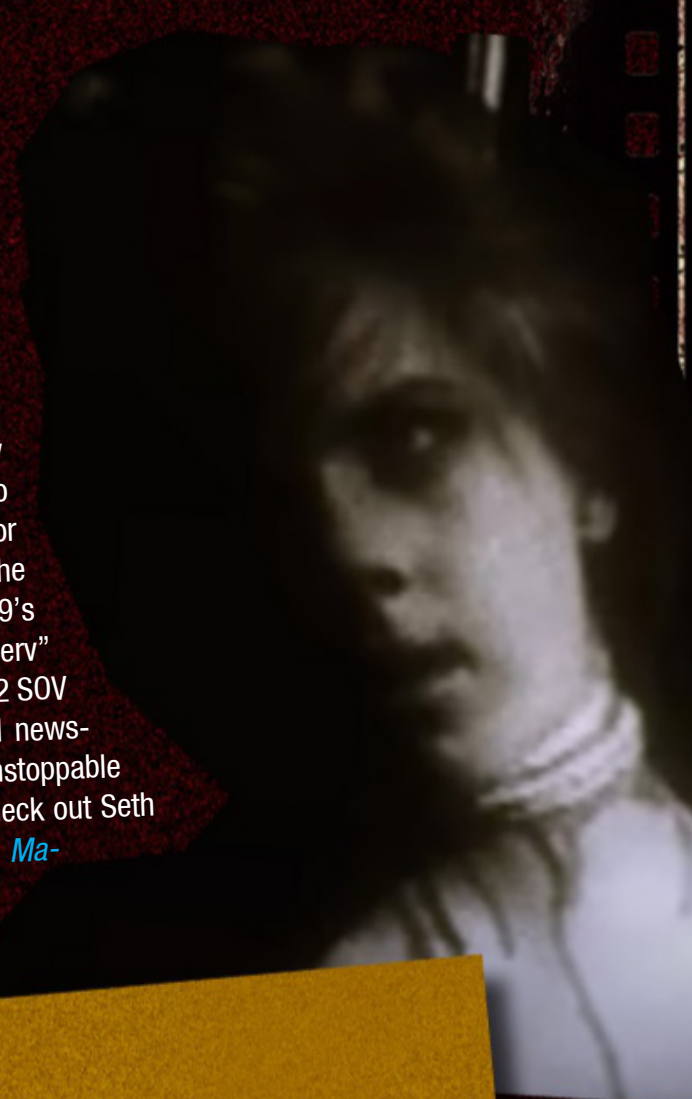
Carpenter Brut (2019)

The work of French darksynth musician Franck Hueso (a.k.a. Carpenter Brut) can best be described as sonic horror, and the lead video for his 2018 release *Leather Teeth* is an evocative love letter to '80s slasher tropes. The concept album tells the story of Bret Halford, a hopeless geek that pines for head cheerleader Kendra McKormick. After he's deformed by an accident in the science lab, Bret returns to take his bloody revenge. Sound familiar? For this track, visual artist Silver Strain evokes the spirit of Skinny Puppy's banned video for 1989's "Worlock" and Brut's own 2012 piece "Le Perv" by cutting together old horror flicks – the 1992 SOV slasher *Zipperface* chief among them – and newspaper clippings to spin the narrative of an unstoppable killer on the loose. Hungry for more Brut? Check out Seth Ickerman's bonkers 2019 sci-fi film *Blood Machines*, for which Hueso provided the score. **JC**

MUMBO JUMBO

Tierra Whack (2017)

Tierra Whack takes mumble rap to unsettling extremes in the video for her 2017 single "Mumbo Jumbo." Sinister from the first frame, Marco Prestini reveals a dental practice at which the vocalist is getting a procedure while an unnerving cast of characters looks on. Vital beats in the song drive cuts and the camera starts to linger as we see more of what is so wrong with this picture; a cockroach here, a blood plume there, and with real suspense the director unveils the rictus grin affixed to Whack and the apocalyptic world that she's forced to face with a permanent smile. **DC**



A NEW BEGINNING

Wolfie's Just Fine (2016)

Canadian multi-hyphenate Jon Lajoie (sometimes known as indie folk artist Wolfie's Just Fine) one-ups all those cornball 1980s slasher tie-in videos with a clip that pays tribute to the experience of witnessing your first horror movie. Gabriel Bateman (*Child's Play* 2019) quakes in terror at the murders of two stand-ins for John Robert Dixon and Debusue Voorhees in a recreation of the post-coital kill scene in *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*. Imagining himself an active participant, he experiences the first burblings of sexual yearning coupled with violent death in a stirring distillation of the sort of traumatic childhood high that horror fans spend the rest of their lives chasing. **RTT**



BURN THE WITCH

Radiohead (2016)

Not to be confused with the Queens of the Stone Age track, this single from Radiohead's *A Moon Shaped Pool* was accompanied by a stop-motion video directed by Chris Hopewell. Produced in the style of the Trumptonshire trilogy of British children's programs from the 1960s, the claymation adds a devilishly ironic touch to the tale of an inspector observing increasingly macabre events in an otherwise peaceful town. It soon becomes apparent that the clip is essentially a retelling of Robin Hardy's folk horror urtext *The Wicker Man*, climaxing with cartoonish flames licking their way up a giant effigy as the plasticine investigator is burned alive. **SK**

VOODOO IN MY BLOOD

Massive Attack feat. Young Fathers (2016)

Massive Attack's emergence from the dynamic early '90s Bristol music scene set off an enthralling downward spiral for the era's alternative sound with heady electronic distortion, languorous beats, and gender-bent vocals soaked in voluptuous darkness. The music video for the band's dangerous 2014 single "Voodoo in My Blood" recasts its sound in an even darker, sexier glaze for a new generation. In the clip, Ringan Ledwidge directs a captivating, *Gone Girl*-era Rosamund Pike in an Isabelle Adjani-indebted subway freakout as she struggles against an enigmatic, needle-thrusting, mind-controlling metal orb ripped from some sleek futuristic dimension straight out of *Phantasm*. **RC**

INSANE

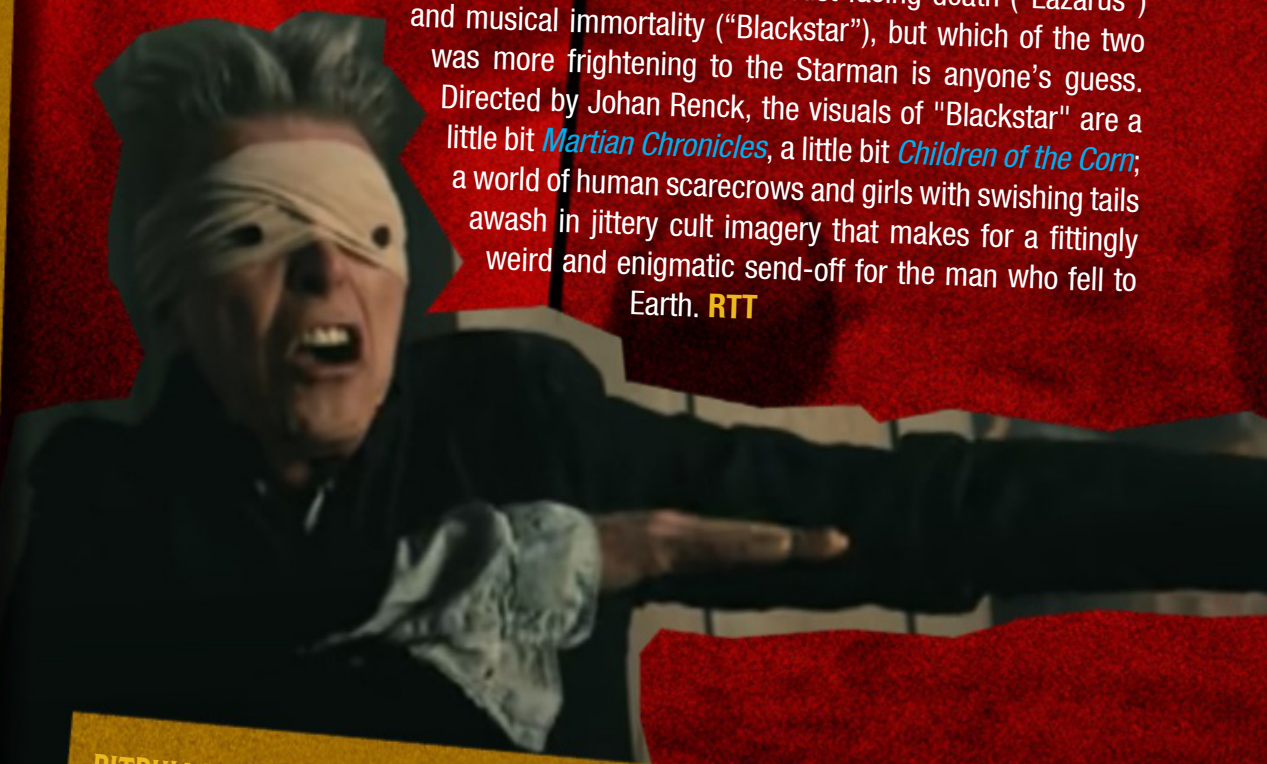
Korn (2016)

Say cheese and die! Numetal stalwarts Korn delve into post-mortem photography with the video for the second single from 2016's *The Serenity of Suffering*. The clip's protagonist is a photographer tasked with snapping the portrait of a deceased woman, but the view through his lens shows something decidedly different than the lifeless corpse on his couch: the lady twitching and screaming inside a grainy vortex, one that the photographer can't help but journey into himself. It's the perfect visual complement to the world that Jonathan Davis' guttural cries and the heavy guitars create — a black box of anguish from which there is no return. **JC**

BLACKSTAR

David Bowie (2015)

Major Tom's skull becomes a sacred totem to a civilization beyond the stars in this video for the title track of David Bowie's 26th and final studio album. Recorded in secret and released a mere two days before his passing from then-unreported liver cancer, this mysterious final masterwork does double duty as a swansong and parting gift for devotees of his iconic brand of extraterrestrial experimental rock. The album's dual singles and their accompanying visuals see the artist facing death ("Lazarus") and musical immortality ("Blackstar"), but which of the two was more frightening to the Starman is anyone's guess. Directed by Johan Renck, the visuals of "Blackstar" are a little bit *Martian Chronicles*, a little bit *Children of the Corn*; a world of human scarecrows and girls with swishing tails awash in jittery cult imagery that makes for a fittingly weird and enigmatic send-off for the man who fell to Earth. **RTT**



PITBULL TERRIER

Die Antwoord (2014)

Showcasing impressive canine prosthetics designed by makeup FX veteran Steve Johnson (*Blade II*, *Men in Black*), this sun-baked clip for South African rap-rave group Die Antwoord's "Pitbull Terrier" manages to stitch together the unpalatable weirdness of filmmaker Harmony Korine (a frequent collaborator) and the braggadocio of American hip hop. The clip revels in kink and gore as rail-thin rapper Watkin Tudor Jones Jr. (a.k.a. "Ninja") plays a human-pitbull hybrid who tears apart a lookalike of Mr. Worldwide and gets pancaked by a bus while chasing down his bandmate Yolandi Visser — who promptly revives him by spitting in his mouth. Yum. **SP**



YEAR ZERO (UNCENSORED)

Ghost (2013)

The atmospheric black-and-white visual for the second single from the Swedish metal band's sophomore album *Infestissumam* begins with satanic chanting and the silhouette of a boy reaching towards the sky. After this eerie opening, the Amir Chamdin-directed video involves a group of women waiting in a mirrored room – their faces grotesquely distorted by the looking glass – for a mysterious man in black who arrives for a bacchanalian feast of raw meat and wine. The women then remove their clothing to don robes and masks – the kind of satanic imagery that the band excels at. With his acolytes outfitted, the man reveals himself to be Ghost front-man Tobias Forge's demonic anti-pope alter-ego Papa Emeritus II for the rousing, climactic chorus... before revealing himself more graphically (phallically?) for a parting kiss-off. **SK**



EVIL EYE

Franz Ferdinand (2013)

Released just in time for Halloween 2013 as the third single from Franz Ferdinand's fourth studio album, *Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action*, "Evil Eye" is a spooky yet catchy song from the Scottish rock band. The gleefully freakish music video directed by Diane Martel is a tribute to the grainy, gruesome delights of old horror films of the VHS era. Surprisingly gory and deliciously lo-fi, the clip showcases dismemberment, cannibalism, mutants, implied necrophilia, Poe-ish immurement, and, perhaps most disturbingly, the sleazy mustachioed face of lead singer Alex Kapranos superimposed on a fat man's stomach. Truly the stuff of nightmares! **SK**



DISCONNECTED

Keane (2012)

While English alt-rockers Keane might not typically conjure thoughts of horror, the band certainly makes its love of the genre abundantly clear with the video for this track from the 2012 release *Strangeland*. Shot inside an old estate near Barcelona, *REC 3* actress Leticia Dolera channels her inner Edwige Fenech as she stumbles through its haunted halls, her seemingly unhinged lover in pursuit, in this glorious tribute to Italian *giallo*. Spanish maestros J.A. Bayona (*The Orphanage*) and Sergio G. Sánchez (*Marrowbone*) evoke the grain and grit of vintage Euro-horror so perfectly, you can almost hear the sprockets turning. **JC**

RUE MORGUE LOOKS BACK AT THE MUSIC VIDEOS SHOT BY FAMOUS HORROR FILMMAKERS... AND SOME MIGHT SURPRISE YOU

MAESTROS OF HORROR

MTV EDITION
BY AARON VON LUPTON

FROM SPIKE JONZE AND DAVID FINCHER TO GORE VERBINSKI, countless established Hollywood directors got their start in the business by directing music videos. The medium came into its own with the MTV generation of the '80s, and has continued to evolve over time, from music videos that aimed to tell a micro-story in a few minutes, to far more ambitious and cinematic entries. This career trajectory is less common among genre filmmakers, but many of them dabbled in music videos in the midst of their careers which, let's face it, were less lucrative than the likes of Michael Bay and Brett Ratner.

Some horror directors' forays into the genre are truly legendary, the most obvious being Rob Zombie's atmospheric videos for White Zombie and his solo career, as well as John Landis' work on the iconic "Thriller," which was a breakout mini-movie for the 1982 Michael Jackson hit. Not every effort is as well-known or obvious though, as several horror flick heroes directed videos completely under the radar, sometimes for artists and songs that are at complete odds with the genre.

Still, it's fun to look back at the various music videos made by the likes of Tobe Hooper and Sam Raimi, and spot those unique stylistic touches that would become their cinematic trademarks.

A key example that might be news to even the hardest of horror fans: *Phantasm* mastermind Don Coscarelli helmed the video for heavy metal icon Dio's "Last in Line," complete with special makeup effects by John Carl Buechler (*From Beyond*) – and honestly, this is horror/heavy metal gold! So many teen-



Dio - "Last in Line"

age outcasts of the '80s loved metal as much as splatter flicks and the relationship between both art forms is well established. Wedged in Coscarelli's career between the original 1979 *Phantasm* and its 1988 sequel, the "Last in Line" video is as cheesy as a 1984 Dio album cover (cheesier, actually), but keen fans will note its subtle allusions to the Tall Man franchise, including a desolate hellscape populated by mutant slaves, not unlike *Phantasm*'s dwarf slave-populated alien world. Both artists had a lasting mutual respect for one another, with Dio praising Coscarelli's video work in future interviews, and the director paying tribute to the vocalist upon his death in 2010.

Later on in heavy metal history, there is some debate over which version of the song "Hellraiser" is best: the Ozzy Osbourne original from his *No More Tears* (1991) album or Motörhead's cover from the following year. Motörhead wins the cool video award though, hands down. This version was featured in 1992's *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth*, the same year the song was released, as the franchise become more Americanized in line with the mainstream MTV generation. Somewhat surprisingly, original *Hellraiser* creator Clive Barker agreed to helm the music video for the song (the movie was directed by Anthony Hickox). Shot in one day, the video features Lemmy playing poker with Pinhead, played again by Doug Bradley. To no one's surprise, the game culminates with Lemmy handing Pinhead the Ace of Spades for the win, but losing his soul in the process. (Also unsurprising is the rumour that Lemmy drank a full decanter of whiskey during the shoot.)



Motorhead - "Hellraiser"

Speaking of cool horror mash-ups, we can't forget that time George A. Romero, king of the zombies, directed a music video for the Misfits. The story is well-known now: Romero needed a band to perform during a scene in his Toronto-shot film *Bruiser* (2000), and who was to come calling but lead Misfit Jerry Only? A deal was struck in which Romero would shoot a video for "Scream," the only single off of the Misfits' classic horror-steeped sophomore album *Famous Monsters* (1999), and in return, the song would be featured in the film with the band performing. Talk about cross-promotion!

The Misfits wound up writing and recording two other songs for the film, "Fiend Without a Face" and "Bruiser." The result was a brief moment of horror nostalgia magic, with two legendary names in different realms of the genre working together to create something special. The video itself was shot in black and white and featured the band members in zombie makeup terrorizing a hospital. The "Scream" video came as a bonus VHS when fiends purchased the Jerry Only and Doyle action figures from 21st Century Toys.

Less horror-related and much more mainstream, but nevertheless iconic, was Tobe Hooper's video for Billy Idol's 1981 mega hit "Dancing With Myself." Idol reportedly handpicked the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* director for the video, an *Omega Man*-inspired concoction depicting the former Generation X frontman dancing with mutants on top of a skyscraper in a post-apocalyptic setting. Supposedly, there are some intentional *Texas Chainsaw* moments in the video, including a man swinging a hammer and a mummified corpse prop from the original film! Idol must have been quite the fan.

The Stooges frontman Iggy Pop may be one of the godfathers of punk,

FANTASY

DyE (2011)

The abstract body horror of David Cronenberg meets Katsuhiro Ôtomo's *Akira* in the video for French electropop artist DyE's "Fantasy." Anticipating the watery climax of *It Follows* three years later, the clip tells the story of four teenagers who break into an indoor pool to have some fun, until things take a supernatural and disturbing turn. The video's chilling success lies not just in the juxtaposition between the innocuous animation style and the graphic sexual and violent content, but the nostalgic sweetness of the song itself, which provides an unforgettable, ironic counterpoint to the horrors on display. **HM**



GOOD DAY TODAY

David Lynch (2011)

It's out of character for David Lynch to turn the creative reins over to someone else, but that's precisely what the *Mulholland Drive* director did with "Good Day Today." Directed by French filmmaker Arnold de Parscau, the official video was handpicked by Lynch himself from over 400 entries submitted in a contest hosted on the online creative marketing platform Genero. Parscau's visuals both complement and serve as a counterpoint to Lynch's electronically manipulated vocals, synth soundscapes, and childlike lyrics. In the clip, a small boy disappears into a bowl of soup only to emerge in a reality that is even bleaker than the banal domesticity from which he escaped. Gouged eyes give way to a bizarre seaborne interlude before a shocking denouement brings our diminutive hero's strange journey full circle. Ultimately, Parscau's vision is a perfect fit because it explores many of Lynch's pet obsessions without trying to ape the master's unmistakable style. **WJW**

WE ARE WATER

Health (2010)

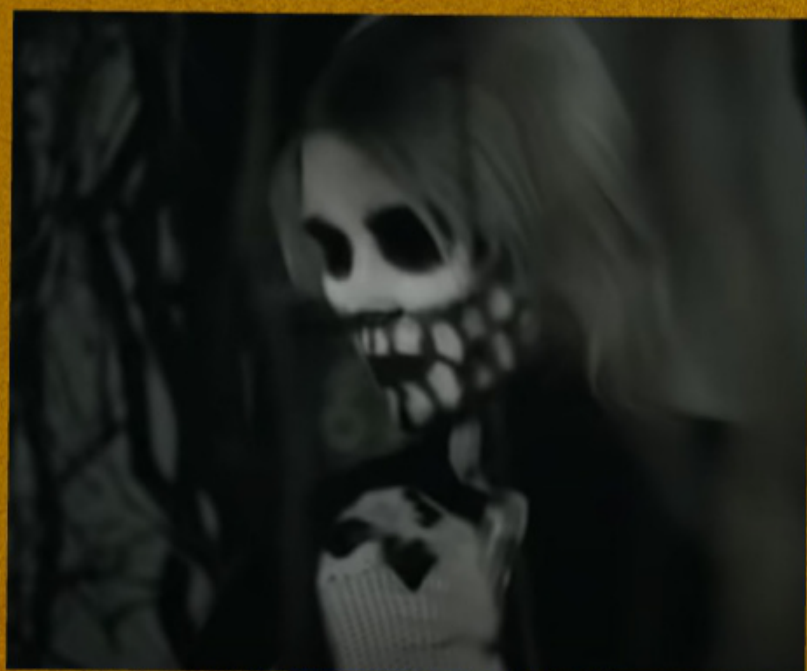
American noise rock band Health's video for the aquatic 2010 track serves up a brutal conclusion to the greatest slasher flick that never was – minus all the boring sex and drug use. The Eric Wareheim-directed short sees a final girl fleeing a lumbering psychopath in blood-streaked tighty whities through a forest as snow begins to fall. With enriching visual touches, powerful slo-mo, and torrents of gore, Wareheim makes the couple-hundred seconds feel like a satisfying beginning, middle, and end, though we'd be lying if we said we aren't holding our collective breath to this day for a 90 minute feature. **RTT**



IF I HAD A HEART

Fever Ray (2009)

"This will never end 'cause I want more," is the first line of "If I Had a Heart," the opening track off Karin Dreijer's glorious debut solo album as Fever Ray. The Swedish electropop maven's ten-song odyssey into primal, folkloric terror kicks off with this pulsing, rhythmic elegy to emptiness and hunger. "If I had a heart I would love you," she intones threateningly as Andreas Nilsson's video cuts between heart-stopping shots of a palatial estate lined with lifeless bodies as Dreijer, in full swamp-witch regalia and striking skull face paint, opens a circle with her droning incantations. **RC**



Cont'd on p.32

but try telling that to today's kids. Post-Stooges, the most rockin' Iggy got is "Cold Metal" from 1988's *Instinct* album, which netted him a Grammy. Fresh off directing the manic and groundbreaking *Evil Dead II*, Sam Raimi agreed to direct the video for the song, featuring Iggy and his band doing their thing in a stark industrial warehouse. Raimi's trademark camera work is unmistakable, from close-ups on Iggy's wide eyes surrounded by darkness, frantic editing and, yes, the time warp effect from *Evil Dead II*.

There is no getting around it though: John Landis' work for Michael Jackson's "Thriller" remains the ultimate mash-up of music videos and horror – an iconic moment in music video history and one that has yet to be surpassed. As legend has it, Jackson contacted Landis directly after seeing the director's 1981 classic *An American Werewolf in London*, and the two conceived of a concept in which Jackson and his entourage transform into zombies and perform a dance routine set to a 1950s backdrop, all inspired by the 1957 film *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*. Special FX wiz Rick Baker, who won an Oscar for the werewolf transformation in Landis' film, was brought in to handle Jackson's zombification. "Thriller" won over the hearts of horror kids as a lighthearted pop take on the '80s splatter scene and remains a key track on Halloween party playlists today.



Michael Jackson - "Thriller"

Today, horror plays a bigger role in music videos than ever before, thanks to the genre's increasing popularity and recognition in mainstream culture. It is used by everyone from crossover thrash heroes Municipal Waste to Rihanna. But with horror fans' obsession with nostalgia, it's fun to look back on some of the genre's best-known retro names to see how they applied their trade to all manner of artists, both spooky-themed and otherwise. Honourable mentions go to *Pet Semetary*'s Mary Lambert for her controversial, burning-cross-laden video for Madonna's "*Like A Prayer*" (1989), Richard Donner's goofy, rock 'n' wrestling video for Cyndi Lauper's "*The Goonies R' Good Enough*" (1985) and William (The Exorcist) Friedkin's spicy work on Laura Branigan's "*Self Control*" (1984). Perhaps the most mind-bogglingly strange connection came from Hitchcock disciple and master of controversy Brian De Palma directing Courtney Cox dancing onstage with working-class hero Bruce Springsteen on "*Dancing in the Dark*" (1984).

So head on over to YouTube, plug in your headphones and take a jump back in time to revisit the maestros' touch in the music of a bygone era. 🍷



Laura Branigan - "Self Control"

SFX LEGEND **NORMAN CABRERA** HAS SPENT ALMOST FOUR DECADES BRINGING HIS BLOODSOAKED VISION TO THE MUSIC VIDEOS OF WHITE ZOMBIE, GLENN DANZIG, THE RAMONES, AND MORE

MUSIC VIDEO MAD SCIENTIST

BY ALEX DELLER

IT'S OLD NEWS TO ANYONE READING *RUE MORGUE* THAT THE '80s WERE GROUND ZERO FOR MUCH OF THE HORROR WE HOLD DEAR, from the VHS boom and boundary-pushing practical effects to the birth of innumerable iconic creatures, characters, and franchises. But away from the flashy, trashy spectacles of cinema and home videotapes, there was another emerging art form lurking in the shadows, ready to dig its claws into popular culture: the music video. Spurred by the meteoric rise of MTV and John Landis' thirteen-minute mini-horror movie for Michael Jackson's 1983 megahit *Thriller*, music videos soon began to boast bigger budgets and even bigger ideas.

For FX artist Norman Cabrera, music videos were not only the visual soundtrack of his youth but a source of creative inspiration he would later apply to directing genre-steeped music videos for such acts as Danzig, White Zombie, and the Ramones.

"I would literally sculpt stuff in my bedroom and just have MTV cycling through," he says. "The videos would play through and I'd occasionally glance at the screen, and there was such a wide variety of great music to choose from."

While many aspiring filmmakers use music vids as a way to gain a foothold within the industry, Cabrera already had a successful career working SFX and makeup on movies, having been mentored by none other than Rick Baker and cut his teeth on such visually astonishing horror films as *Wishmaster*, *Thir13en Ghosts*, and *Drag Me to Hell*. His first gig as a music video director for Twisted Sister's "Be Chrool to Your Scuel" was as serendipitous as the video is wild. In it, Bobcat Goldthwait appears as a high school teacher, retiring to the staff lounge to take a break with Tom Savini. Upon plugging in headphones to Professor Goldthwait's Walkman, the pair transform into Dee Snider and Alice Cooper, and the school is overrun with shambling zombies.

"I was working with Rick Baker's crew on *Harry and the Hendersons*, and my friend Howard Berger told me they were shooting a music video over

the weekend for Twisted Sister," says Cabrera. "[Berger] said, 'Tom Savini is bringing appliances from *Day of the Dead*, do you want to come and stick zombie makeup on some teenagers?' So we pulled this crazy weekender, and it was just a blast."

After this admittedly seat-of-the-pants induction to the world of directing videos, Cabrera would begin to seek out bands he actively wanted to work with, a quest that landed him a gig working alongside Thomas C. Rainone on the video for Revolting Cocks' unlikely Rod Stewart cover, "Do Ya Think I'm Sexy?" The video sets the band at a zany strip-show/sideshow carnival, where bikini-clad ghouls cavort onstage, removing flesh and skin above and beyond their clothes.

"It was absolutely insane!" remembers Cabrera with a laugh. "There were people juggling bloody heads, and I built all this crazy stuff for it like a guy with a dunce's cap made out of flesh. Ed Neal from *Texas Chainsaw* is actually in the video, so I got to make him up with the birthmark on his face. And they had the mother there, because I think Tom at the time owned [the prop] – the corpse of the mama in the recliner."

Cabrera went on to work with Rainone on the Ramones' cover of The Who's "Substitute," resculpting Rob Bottin's "pinhead" mask featured in *Rock 'n' Roll High School* and getting to rub shoulders with the likes of Lemmy from Motörhead, White Zombie's Sean Yseult, Michael Berryman, and Karen Black. There was also music video magic to be made with heavy metal act Prong, the Misfits (bringing to life the band's iconic Crimson Ghost), and Glenn Danzig – for whom Cabrera mashed an oozing H.R. Giger design with a manga-inspired

amputee effect for a decidedly NSFW vid of "How the Gods Kill" featuring "supermasochist" Bob Flanagan.

This latter project led to a productive and long-standing working relationship with Rob Zombie, who he met when White Zombie was Danzig's support act. Given Zombie's deep, greasy pool of horror and exploitation influences, it



Danzig - "How the Gods Kill"



was a match made in Hell, and Cabrera eventually graduated from directing the band's music videos to designing its entire elaborate stage set for tour.

"I was living in Van Nuys and I didn't have a huge shop, so I built their entire stage in my backyard," he says. "I was there with a meat slicer, cutting foam and building this huge foam devil head and all these clowns hanging on crosses. In LA, oddly enough, you can put a gigantic devil head in your backyard and no one will say anything."

After providing similar creative support for Rob Zombie's *Hellbilly* solo album and tour (as well as his directorial debut, *House of 1000 Corpses*), Cabrera turned his skills toward film and TV, including such high-budget properties as the *Hellboy*, *Walking Dead* and *Star Trek* franchises. The pendulum eventually swung back to music videos, however, after he made contact with Ryan Waste (a.k.a. Richard Ryan Joy), guitarist for Virginia-based thrash metalers Municipal Waste.

"I was a fan because they were referencing the '80s thrash stuff that I loved when I was growing up, but it wasn't like purely retro either," he says. "[Ryan is] a huge horror movie nut and loves the 'good stuff' like Cronenberg and Carpenter, but he also likes the schlocky stuff too."

Cabrera initially offered his design and makeup services, but the band made a counter-offer that he direct the music video for the title track off 2017's *Slime and Punishment*. Eager to scratch a creative itch, Cabrera accepted. The result is a four-minute video featuring a leather-clad metalhead perusing the horror section of a video store and accepting a cursed videotape from a demon, while Municipal

Waste rocks onstage. Pleased with his artistic vision, the band commissioned him to direct the video for the follow-up track, "Electrified Brain;" a punk rock love letter to the classic horror of *Saw* and *Dead Ringers*.



"[For 'Electrified Brain,'] we felt like we had to pull out all the stops and make it as crazy and over-the-top as we possibly could," says Cabrera. "Melting heads, bleeding eyes... that was the game plan. I wanted to recreate the album art, whilst also having this crazy doctor involved: a Cronenberg-style character mixed with Lucio Fulci's Dr. Freudstein. There's also a cameo from *Trick or Treat*'s Marc Price — he's the guy in the electric chair at the beginning."

A classic tale of the superfan who chased his dreams of working with his personal horror heroes, Cabrera's credits continue to grow with make-up gigs on such genre blockbusters as *Malignant* and *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark*, but he remains enthusiastic about the cinematic potential of the music video format. Indeed, with filmmaking technology becoming more affordable than ever and bands able to interact more directly with their fans through social media, the music video still provides horror acts the chance to convey their artistic worldview in new and exciting ways.

"There's been a real resurgence in elaborate music videos from bands across all kinds of different genres," he says. "I think a lot of times things fall through the cracks and it takes a new generation to discover how cool something is. I think a lot of bands are only just discovering how cool it is to put their creative vision onto the screen, not just on record." 📺

KIDS

MGMT (2009)

If you ever needed the worst fears of your childhood validated, look no further. The conceit of the indie rock group's most famous (infamous?) video is that all the monsters we thought were lurking just beyond the safe confines of our cribs were 100% real. One hopes the video's infant performer was awarded a lifetime supply of ice cream for screaming his head off at the onslaught of zombies and mutants straight out of a Raimi/Kaufman/Cronenberg nightmare. That this one ends in an animation meltdown that would make Robert Crumb and Charles Burns smile only feels too fitting. **JC**



SHEENA IS A PARASITE

The Horrors (2006)

Combine strobe lighting, a frenetic Samantha Morton (best known to *RM* readers as Alpha from *The Walking Dead*), creepy makeup effects from director Chris Cunningham (frequent collaborator with Aphex Twin, Madonna), and a frantic post-punk freakout of a track that only lasts 100 seconds, and you've got an utterly unforgettable audio/visual treat. For UK rock outfit The Horrors' debut single, the black-clad band – led by charismatic singer Faris Badwan – provides the soundtrack as Morton thrashes desperately to the beat: disembowelling herself as her face flays apart into a Lovecraftian mass of jelly-like flesh. Far out. **SP**

PARABOLA

Tool (2002)

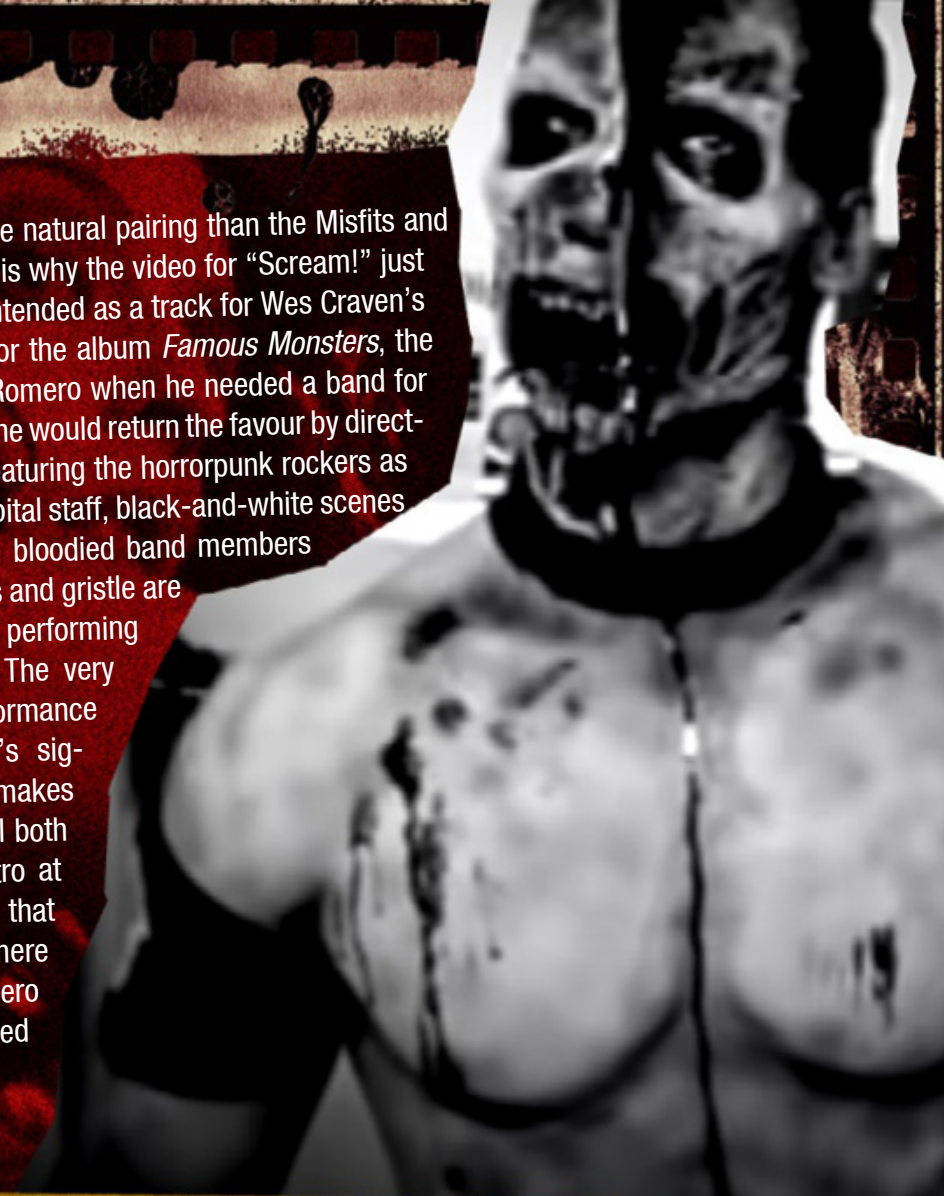
Inspired by the works of the Brothers Quay (what dark music makers weren't in the early aughts?), "Parabola" tells the story of an individual (played by producer/recording artist Tricky) taking a mystical journey through the horrors of the physical world toward enlightenment in a Kundalini-like awakening. What makes the video so chilling, however, is the slow and methodical way it unfolds, dripping with uneasy visuals, graphic violence, and likely the most disturbing use of black goo you'll ever witness. "Parabola" is a masterclass in unsettling imagery that shows how simple animation leveraging the uncanny valley can be downright terrifying. **HM**



SCREAM!

Misfits (1999)

It's hard to imagine a more natural pairing than the Misfits and George A. Romero, which is why the video for "Scream!" just makes sense. Originally intended as a track for Wes Craven's *Scream 2* but reworked for the album *Famous Monsters*, the group made a deal with Romero when he needed a band for his 2000 film *Bruiser* that he would return the favour by directing the eventual video. Featuring the horrorpunk rockers as zombies terrorizing a hospital staff, black-and-white scenes of the newly reanimated, bloodied band members munching away on brains and gristle are crosscut with the band performing the song in full colour. The very late-'90s musical performance combined with Romero's signature undead mayhem makes the entire endeavour feel both fresh and classically retro at the same time – proving that the Misfits were not mere visitors to the world Romero made, they'd always lived there. **DC**



LIVING DEAD GIRL

Rob Zombie (1999)

For the second single from his debut solo album, *Hellbilly Deluxe*, shock rocker Rob Zombie threw it back – way back – to the genre's German roots. "Living Dead Girl" stars Zombie as a mad doctor and his wife/muse Sheri Moon as an eerily alluring somnambulist in a masterful recreation of director Robert Wiene's expressionist classic, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Helmed in tandem with Joseph Kahn, Zombie uses intertitles, juddery images, and faint tinges of colour to replicate the silent era original. It's a monument to the rocker's primary influences that, in hindsight, foretold his evolution into a filmmaker in his own right. **RTT**



COME TO DADDY

Aphex Twin (1997)

Music videos truly don't get weirder than "Come to Daddy." The brilliantly batshit Chris Cunningham-directed clip sees an old lady menaced by a group of no-good children, all of whom share the creepy face of Aphex Twin mastermind Richard D. James. That the clip was shot at the same council estate as Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* may be a coincidence, but the video definitely taps into the artist's wry sense of humour and the film's antisocial chaos. The skeletal wraith screaming at the old age pensioner near the video's end is just one indelible image that makes "Come to Daddy" both infamous and infernal. **SP**



Solve A Murder Mystery From Home



Use code **RUE20** for **20%OFF**

There are many strange events happening in the sleepy town of Valley Falls, and you get to investigate them all! With a murder mystery box from The Deadbolt Mystery Society, you will examine evidence, interview suspects, solve puzzles, follow leads, and close the case!

WWW.DADBOLTMYSTERYSOCETY.COM



AFTER SHOCKING AUDIENCES WITH AN ORGY OF UNFORGETTABLE
CARNAGE IN 2016, ART THE CLOWN RETURNS TO WREAK BLOODY
HAVOC THIS HALLOWEEN IN **TERRIFIER 2**

SEND IN THE

CLOWN!

BY ANDREA SUBISSATI

AMONG HORROR'S GREATEST STRENGTHS IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIE FILM-MAKERS TO MAKE AS BIG A BLOODY SPLASH in the genre as the Hollywood heavyweights, and streaming services like Shudder have risen to the occasion by providing a widely accessible platform for these less conventional passion projects. Among Shudder's crown jewels is 2016's surprise hit *Terrifier* – an intensely gory low-budget slasher about a sadistic clown stalking a pair of drunken costumed teens who think their night of frights ended at the Halloween party. Unfortunately (for them), their nightmare has just begun when they first encounter Art the Clown at a pizzeria, winking and waving from across the aisle. The silent but deadly mime has much more than murder on his mind, with a sadistic bloodlust that goes well beyond the usual hack-'n'-slash fare in a one-night rampage of gratuitous violence that claims the lives of anyone who crosses his path. One of the film's first kills, in which Art mounts his victim, naked and upside down, and saws her in half, crotch to crown, was an early cue to audiences that writer/director Damien Leone wasn't clowning around. Brief at 86 minutes but more than making up for it in shock value – with unforgettable scenes involving dismembered breasts, a crazed cat lady, and blood flow aplenty – *Terrifier* had audiences using their still-agape jaws to beg Leone for a sequel, and this fall, he's happy to oblige.

Hitting Shudder this October, *Terrifier 2* promises everything a horror sequel should: a broader scope and setting, new players, and the nasty bits turned up to eleven. *Rue Morgue* sat down with the SFX artist-turned-filmmaker for an early peek at the hotly anticipated Halloween horror-show.

What was your reaction to *Terrifier*'s success? Did you expect it to do as well as it did?

Honestly, it doesn't sink in, no matter how popular it keeps getting. Every time I see a new [*Terrifier*] tattoo or artwork – things popping up on a daily basis, pretty much – it's wild, it's thrilling. As far as the success, I created this character back in 2005 or 2006 for my first short film and I made a bunch of subsequent shorts and eventually [Art] was in *All Hallows' Eve* and every time I made something new, the fan base grew a little more and especially people closest to me would be like, 'Dude, that clown is so crazy, you really have something there, you have to keep going. You have to make bigger movies and expand upon him.' And so hearing that so many times, I knew that there was something special there. But it was just really hard to find the funding. It was very difficult, until recently, to convince somebody that clowns could sell a movie, believe it or not. Before *It* came out, I heard that so many times, that clowns will not sell a movie, so it took a long time to get from where I began to where we are now.



Tricks And Treats: *Terrifier 2* filmmaker Damien Leone puts his special makeup effects skills on full display.

Were you aiming to be controversial with the violence or just as entertaining as you could be?

I'd be lying if I said no; I knew that the kills were going to be controversial. I grew up loving controversial horror movies. Since I am a special effects artist and we were not dealing with a big Hollywood studio, I knew I could personally do [crazy kills] for very little money in the special effects world that you're not going to see in a Hollywood horror movie. So knowing that I could

do things like that, and my obsession with Tom Savini since I was a little kid, and doing makeup effects, I wanted it to be gory and not so much controversial but very shocking and in-your-face. There's no doubt about it, that I knew I would be exploiting the violence.

Were there any criticisms of the first film that surprised you?

I get constantly accused of being misogynistic. Of course, today, it's inevitable. What re-

ally shocked me was [being called] transphobic, based on the scene where [Art] skins and wears the woman. It makes me laugh, because it couldn't be any further away from what I am, raised by all women and everything. It's so funny to me. I think I'm just so comfortable [tackling sexual violence] because I was raised by all women that I don't think about those things when I'm doing it. I don't think I'm offending, I'm not *trying* to offend, so there's really nothing I'm not afraid to show. There's things I won't show; there are lines that I try not to cross, believe it or not. No matter how grotesque and intense these scenes get, I always keep it in the back of my head like, 'How far can we push it but still maintain some level of accessibility, and get as many people [as possible] interested?' Because sometimes the violence can be so absolutely shocking where it becomes very niche, and I'm trying to make [*Terrifier 2*] a little broader, but again, there's criticisms across the board. I get accused of everything; if I took that to heart, these movies wouldn't even exist.

Did you ever wonder if anything in the first film was going too far?

I knew the hacksaw scene was going to be the showstopper. I knew that was going to be the scene that everybody was going to talk about; everybody who read the script, that was the scene that jumped out. I always give credit to Catherine [Corcoran] who played Dawn, who gets cut in half, because when she took the part and we met in person after the audition before we started shooting to talk about the part, she said, "If we're going to do this, let's go all the way and let's make this the coolest thing ever. Because if we don't go all the way, it's just not worth doing." I was so glad to hear her say that, because that's where I'm coming from; I want this to be something that people talk about long after they see the movie. So she was all-in and so dedicated, and it was not an easy scene to shoot, physically and mentally. It wasn't a fun day on set, but we got through it and people talk about it in the way we hoped they would. People get tattoos of the scene, there's models that I have that they make at horror conventions of her upside down, so whenever I see that, it just warms my heart.

How do you up the ante for a sequel to a movie that's already so extreme?

One of the biggest challenges was trying to top the hacksaw scene because it's become the most talked-about scene in the movie. But aside from the gore (which there's plenty of – there's double the amount of gore in part two), this was more about expanding the scope of the universe, so to speak. The first *Terrifier* is very confined, because it was so low budget, so in this one I wanted to expand the setting so it's in many different locations, and the locations are bigger. And the characters, more importantly – we re-



Angel Of Death: Leone promises that *Terrifier 2*'s final girl Sienna (Lauren LaVera) is a force to be reckoned with.

"ONE OF THE BIG KILLS IN TERRIFIER 2 IS [BASED ON] A FAMOUS PHOTO OF ONE OF JACK THE RIPPER'S VICTIMS."
WRITER/DIRECTOR DAMIEN LEONE

ally took the time to flesh out the heroes in this one and I'm most excited, believe it or not, for everybody to meet the Sienna character. Aside from Art, she's probably my favourite character that I've ever written; I have more of a soft spot in my heart for her than Art. I drew from personal relationships and experiences in my life to flesh her out. She's sort of a combination of my two sisters; there's a little bit of me in her character too. She's very strong and very vulnerable and a lot of that comes from the performance given by Lauren LaVera, who I'm so excited for everyone to see.

How do you come up with your creative kills?

It could be anything, any little nugget of inspiration. For the hacksaw scene, I was doing research online of medieval torture methods, and this one method popped up that I said, "Oh my God, if that actually existed, that is the most horrifying way to go." It was basically like in the movie, but more realistically, they would hang you upside-down and take a giant saw (I guess to cut down logs or whatever) and there would be a person on each end and they would just saw the person in half. And supposedly, because you're hanging upside down and all the blood is draining [upwards], you could actually cut through quite a bit of them before they die

of blood loss or I'm assuming the shock would take you out very quickly, because that's so horrifying. And then for part two – I've never told anybody this shit; I'll tell you, but I can't go into too many specifics – one of the big kills in *Terrifier 2* is [based on] a famous photo of one of Jack the Ripper's victims on a bed and the body is so horribly mutilated it's barely recognizable as a human being. I saw that photo and I said, "Well, that's a good place to end, let's just reverse-engineer that and see how that character ended up in that spot."

Tell me about your working relationship with David Howard Thornton, who plays Art.

He's fun to be around, he's constantly joking. The funniest thing is how Dave is the man of a thousand voices – basically, before he got into acting and just stumbled into the horror world, almost by accident, Dave was primarily a cartoon voice-over actor. And he loves cartoons; Dave's like a big kid. So the funniest thing is how he's now known for a character that doesn't mutter a sound, which I think is hysterical. But he's still so animated [as Art]. He's a great actor; so many emotions are conveyed through the makeup and through his performance. It's a great relationship, it's very easy. I know exactly what I want every time; starting with the script

FILMMAKER AND SFX GURU **DAMIEN LEONE** DISHES ON HOW HIS LEADING MAN WENT FROM A TAUNTING TEASE TO A TRUE TERRIFIER

MAKING A MANIAC

BY ANDREA SUBISSATI



INTRODUCING A SHINY NEW STAR TO THE PANTHEON OF ICONIC HORROR VILLAINS AIN'T EASY, but *Terrifier*'s maniacal mime pulls it off without so much as a word. Making his cinematic debut in Damien Leone's 2011 twenty-minute short *Terrifier* (which reappears in his 2013 anthology feature, *All Hallows' Eve*), Art the Clown personified cinema's golden rule of "show, don't tell" by limiting his menace to gestures and expressions that would be perfectly at home in the proper context, but deliver visceral chills in the franchise he spawned.

Played by Mike Giannelli, Art's role in *All Hallows' Eve* saw him harrasing a young woman named Casey (Kayla Lian) at a train station as she minds her own business, reading a book, while drunken Halloween partiers drift through. Art's approach starts innocently enough, honking his horn at her until she asks him to stop, whereupon he feigns broken heartedness and offers her a flower in a conciliatory gesture. But the plastic bloom is full of writhing beetles, and Art's next trick is to produce a large syringe from his bag. So begins Casey's hallowing Halloween ordeal, which escalates to her watching a hideous mutant cult perform an amateur C-section on a pregnant captive before she is sexually assaulted by Satan himself.

Intended as a cinematic calling card to highlight Leone's prowess in SFX makeup, *All Hallows' Eve* (available to watch free on Tubi, amid ads for insurance and Expedia) also offered a glimpse into the depths of his depraved imagination, where any and all manner of degeneracy is on the table. The 2016 full-length follow-up, *Terrifier*, managed to up the ante for Art, now played by David Howard Thornton, who also dons the greasepaint for the

upcoming sequel.

"I wanted [*Terrifier*] to be the movie that was going to have the most impact, and it was really just a showcase for Art the Clown as a villain," says Leone. "I felt like this was my one chance to really get him out there and show everybody what he's made of and hopefully they gravitated toward him. So it's really just no-holds-barred, Art the Clown doing his thing."

The film was a smash hit for its unsettling gore and creative kills, and while fans clamoured for more Art, production studios also sniffed around for a new franchise cash cow to be milked. But like any proud parent, the filmmaker felt he needed to hold the creative reigns of the franchise close, free of studio interference that might seek to tame the caustic clown that made *Terrifier* an instant classic.

"I really need to be the gatekeeper of this mythology, so to speak, for as long as possible," says Leone. "We'll see where it goes but right now I'm just very protective over [Art], the direction he's going in, and especially the violence. At this point, it's not about reaching a broader audience – if that's going to happen, great – but I need to stay true to what *Terrifier* is and why it was successful in the first place. I love the fan base that it has now, so I'm making [the films] for myself and for them, first and foremost, and then if other people start to gravitate toward it, amazing. But I don't want to leave that formula just to try to get [a wider audience], or water it down so that other people come in and make it more accessible to them. That's not what I'm doing this for – it needs to be genuine, because that's what it is, and why it worked in the first place."



through to when we get on set, I'll tell Dave what I want him to do – the blocking movements, even down to facial expressions and things like that. We'll do that for a couple of takes and then I'll let Dave go off on takes three, four and five, and let him improvise – especially scenes that lend themselves to that, like the pizzeria [scene] in *Terrifier*, when he's just making faces at Tara. So it's fun to experiment and play around, and a lot of it is moulded and put together in the editing room.

Art doesn't seem to be quite human. Will we learn more about his nature in the new film?

Without giving away too many spoilers, when you meet Sienna and her younger brother Jonathan [Elliott H. Fullam], who is another character that I can't wait for people to see – he's sort of the one driving the story because he's fascinated by Art. The murders [from the first film] happened in their town, so it's one year later and [Art is] already this local legend, and Jonathan is on websites and he's got newspaper clippings and he's trying to put the pieces together and figure out who this guy is, is he coming back, is he dead, because he disappeared from the morgue, and there's all these theories. So he's slowly uncovering clues and bits and pieces about what Art is, or who he may be, and this and that as Art

"YOU'LL DEFINITELY LEARN MORE ABOUT ART IN [TERRIFIER 2]."

WRITER/DIRECTOR DAMIEN LEONE

starts working his way into their lives, physically; he starts interacting with Sienna, and things like that. So you do start to learn things but at the same time, more puzzle pieces are thrown at the audience where even more questions are going to come up. I'm hoping to make at least one more movie after this, so if everything is going to get tied up as much as I want it to be, it will be in the final installment. But you'll definitely learn more about Art in this one.

Is it as fun to make these films as it is to watch them?

Not even close, no. It's not fun. There are little tiny moments of joy while you're making a movie, and it's usually when there's a great performance; where it just hits you inside and you're like, "Oh, that's great, that's what I was looking for, that's going to make it into the movie," or when an effect

that you've been working on for a month comes out great. That moment of joy is relief, and then it's just being surrounded by great people that you like and that are funny and they'll make you laugh during the course of the day; they'll make a joke or add a little levity and that really helps. Other than that, it is just an absolute stressful nightmare – it's just like having a giant ticking clock over your shoulder and no sleep and it's very stressful. A lot of that has to do with the fact that I also do the effects in the movie and

it's so effects-driven. Days when it's just people talking around a table – that's a piece of cake, the greatest thing ever. But typically, I have to get to set two to three hours before everybody else and then I've got to go into the day of setting up the shots – and sometimes even at the end of the day, I had to be the one at five in the morning to take the makeup off and then you've got three hours of sleep before you've got to go back and do it all over again, and you do that for five days straight. It really

takes a toll. It's not that fun unless you're fun, unless you're surrounded by great people which, thankfully, I am. 🤪



THE TERM **COULROPHOBIA** ONLY APPEARED IN THE 1990S, BUT THE FEAR OF CLOWNS GOES BACK MUCH FURTHER



THE CLOWN CREEPS

BY SEAN PLUMMER

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE A TIME WHEN CLOWNS WEREN'T SCARY. Between serial killer John Wayne Gacy, who entertained kids as Pogo the Clown in the 1970s when he wasn't murdering young men; the various book, TV and film versions of Stephen King's Pennywise; and recent iterations of the Joker, clowns have become figures of fear more than fun for the last half-century. In fact, the fear of clowns became official in the 1990s when the term "coulrophobia" entered the lexicon, a condition marked by extreme reactions to the pasty-faced jesters.

Indeed, you have to go back to the mid twentieth century to find fun-loving clowns like Ronald McDonald and Bozo the Clown. But these mass-market entertainers were merely sanitized versions of a darker centuries-long tradition seen in the pygmy clowns in ancient Egypt, the clown Yu Sze who poked fun at Chinese Emperor Qin Shih Huang (221 – 210 BCE), and court jesters in medieval Europe who openly ridiculed royalty – without losing their heads.

These silly if sometimes satirical entertainers became far grimmer centuries later with two titans of the European stage: English comedian actor Joseph Grimaldi and French mime-artist Jean-Gaspard Debureau. Grimaldi's tragic life – which ended with him dying a penniless alcoholic in 1837 – belied the joy he brought to patrons of the Regency London stage. Debureau, meanwhile, brought the stock *commedia dell'arte* character Pierrot to life in Paris. He was also acquitted of killing a boy with his walking stick in 1836 after the boy insulted him.

The sinister side of the profession was explored in the Italian opera *Pagliacci* (translation: *Clowns*), which premiered in 1892. Here, the clown Canio murders his cheating wife Nedda on stage. The tragedy of clowning later crossed the ocean to Depression-era America, with "hobo" clown Emmett Kelly working his divorce into his popular act. Around the same time, Hollywood star and makeup pioneer Lon Chaney (*The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) tapped into this sadness with his performance as the doomed Tito in 1928's *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*. And Hitchcock regular James Stewart (*Rear Window*, *Vertigo*) played a doctor hiding from

the law as the circus clown Buttons in 1952's *The Greatest Show on Earth*.

Of course, this contrast between light and dark proved a natural fit for horror cinema, which takes full advantage of the inherent creepiness of the clown. What fright fan can forget Robbie being attacked by his clown doll in 1982's *Poltergeist*? And the Chiodo brothers made these happy circus stalwarts hilarious and horrifying in 1988's *Killer Clowns from Outer Space*.

But the success of modern malevolent movie clowns like Art in *Terrifier* can in large part be attributed to Stephen King. His 1986 best-seller *It* introduced readers to Pennywise the Dancing Clown, the cheerful face of a cosmic shape-shifting entity that feeds on the terror of children. The now iconic Pennywise seemed to embody everything that made clowns terrifying, including the irony of a child-murderer donning the makeup and costume designed to delight youngsters.

Meanwhile, life imitated art in 2016 when multiple reports of "evil" clowns appearing in quiet neighbourhoods made their way into the news in August of that year. This odd phenomenon originated in Green Bay, Wisconsin, with sightings of a sinister clown lurking about, carrying black balloons. Not surprisingly, it turned out to be a marketing stunt by would-be filmmakers, but similar sightings were cropping up across the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom. Canadian retailer Canadian Tire even pulled clown masks from its stores during the Halloween season that year in response to public reaction.

As for coulrophobia, it remains a recognized if not well-studied phenomenon, with symptoms including anxiety, a racing heart, nausea, and profuse sweating. One study found that approximately ten out of 1000 children, most of them girls, suffered from this fear. Many more, however, seem to simply dislike clowns, attributing their unease to their inability to read human emotions through the garish greasepaint or predict their often frantic behaviour. And with clown horror movies such as *Terrifier 2* reinforcing those fears, expect clowns to remain no laughing matter for some time to come. 🤡

J.W. OCKER'S NEW BOOK, THE UNITED STATES OF CRYPTIDS, INVITES READERS ON A CROSS-COUNTRY HUNT FOR CREATURES THAT CONTINUE TO HAUNT THE AMERICAN PSYCHE

LAND OF CRYPTIDS

BY OWEN WILLIAMS

THE WORD "CRYPTID" WAS COINED IN 1983 BY ONE J.E. WALL

in the newsletter of the International Society of Cryptozoology, in response to a call for "new terms to replace sensational and often misleading terms like 'monster.'" By that time, the study of so-called hidden animals was well on in years, having emerged in the 1950s – a heyday of supposed monster sightings in America that lasted well into the '70s – leading to an extraordinary proliferation of small-town local creature legends, lurching through every state in the Union.

It's this very history and geography that former *Rue Morgue* contributor J.W. Ocker has turned his magnifying glass on for his exhaustive new field guide, *The United States of Cryptids*, out Sept 27 from Quirk Books.

Organized by region, the book follows the author across the country from Northeast to West, exploring an America that, if you believed every tall tale, is full of lake monsters, swamp creatures, lizard men, ghouls, howlers, frogmen, skin-walkers, jackalopes, woodboogers, snallygasters, devils, demons, one alien robot, and many, many Bigfoots.

"I write about everything weird and macabre," Ocker tells *Rue Morgue*, "but the cryptid strain has been there from day one for me. I've always been a monster fan."

As a child growing up in Maryland, Ocker remembers that particular strain first manifesting itself in the lovable and sasquatch-y Chewbacca from *Star Wars*. But cryptids specifically encroached on his world through *The Complete Guide to Mysterious Beings* (1970), a comprehensive tome on all things monster (including aliens, leprechauns, demons, and werewolves) by the prolific cryptozoologist John Keel.

"It was a very short overview of cryptids," Ocker reflects, "but the cover had the Loch Ness Monster and Bigfoot and also the Mothman, which at the time – as a kid – I'd never heard of. Finding that book was like finding an underground animal encyclopedia. It's one thing buying books about vampires and ghosts, but these things were purporting to be actual events. It wasn't just like a ghost hunter in an attic or something, hearing things on a recorder, it was literally news; something was seen, something scared people, hunts were launched. I love that it's always a real occurrence. Cryptids are in this weird spot between fictional monsters and real animals – many of which are monsters anyway, if you start looking at them; look at a Komodo



Cross-Country Cryptids: J.W. Ocker's new book takes readers on a tour of America's local legends.

dragon!"

Like that formative Keel text, *The United States of Cryptids* is aimed at a wider readership than hardcore cryptophiles and necessarily so, says Ocker, since the word "cryptid" is perhaps not as well known as readers of this magazine might expect. It is, he insists, "way more niche than I thought. I don't even know what's weird anymore. My weird barometer is off. These days you hear the word 'crypto' and it's all about virtual currency. You say 'cryptid' to people and they're like, 'Is that related to Bitcoin?'"

Mainstream media, it seems, still prefers to concentrate on the stars of cryptozoo, particularly Bigfoot, who is the focus of so many investiga-

tions despite never once making an appearance (outside of possibly the Patterson-Gimlin film). But behind Bigfoot there is an astonishing diversity of strange creatures, most of whom exist in that shadowy gulf between reality and fantasy, and others that don't even exist there.

"One of great things about cryptozoology is that it gradually came to encompass animals that aren't necessarily biologically possible," Ocker enthuses. "If it's bizarre, if it's supernatural, you can still get it in there. The Fresno Nightcrawlers are definitely not biological, but they're in the cryptid world, and I think that's just because we like monsters. It's like *Pokémon* – part of the appeal of these monsters is the vari-

ety. If it was just a field with Bigfoot, Mothman, and lake monsters, it would be less interesting somehow.”

Ocker’s exhaustive bestiary then, is a welcome reminder of the massive scale of this very American phenomenon. As a relatively young nation, the United States of America has habitually worked at mythologizing itself. Think of the western movie genre, for example, which contains grains of real history but is largely America’s dream of itself: pioneers and heroes striking out across an untamed land. The fact that people had already been living on that land for thousands of years didn’t much factor into the narrative, not until revisionist takes from more recent decades. Likewise, cryptids represent America inventing its own folklore, consciously or otherwise.

“The ’50s to the ’70s is the golden era of cryptids,” Ocker explains. “People were seeing them every day; the newspapers were rife with them. Most of the famous Bigfoot happenings are during that period. The reasons for that are probably manifold. It has to do with media, and most of them also happened out in very small towns in the middle of nowhere where anything bumping in the night is news. But the really, very American thing about cryptids is marketing. We make a statue of Bigfoot if we have a sighting. We launch a festival every year if we have a giant snake sighting. We turn it into a capitalizable thing.”

Many small towns, predictably, attempt to tie their particular monster into Native American mythology, presumably for historical credibility. Ocker allows that “that can be problematic, because here’s a people that do have legends and what they believe is complex and nuanced, and we just kind of boil it down to ‘cool, they saw a giant snake! Meanwhile, the Indigenous people are like, ‘It’s not that simple.’”

As part of his process, Ocker relocated to New England some years ago, precisely to plug himself in somewhere that didn’t feel “brand spanking new.” Moving into a 19th-century house, with a 17th-century cemetery on his route to the grocery store was his way of escaping the superficiality of much of the rest of the country. But it also, by accident or strange design, brought him into the orbit of Loren Coleman’s definitive International Cryptozoology Museum in Maine.

Coleman, the “grandfather of pop cryptozoology,” provides the foreword for *The United States of Cryptids* and became a kind of mentor in Ocker’s quest. It was Coleman, for example, who informed him that the best sources of information are local gas stations.

“He’d just go to those places and ask what was weird,” Ocker says with a laugh. “He says ‘if you go to tourist information, they don’t know that stuff at all.’ And he’s right. When I was looking for the Flatwoods Monster – an alien robot in a dress – I stopped at this gas station in Flatwoods, just to get gas, and there was a shelf filled with



Man-Made Monsters: Statues and totems abound in observance of small-town terrors. (Clockwise from top left) The Jersey Devil, the Flatwoods Monster, and the legendary Thunderbird.

“THE REALLY, VERY AMERICAN THING ABOUT CRYPTIDS IS MARKETING. WE MAKE A STATUE OF BIGFOOT IF WE HAVE A SIGHTING. WE LAUNCH A FESTIVAL EVERY YEAR IF WE HAVE A GIANT SNAKE SIGHTING. WE TURN IT INTO A CAPITALIZABLE THING.”

— AUTHOR J.W. OCKER

Flatwoods Monster memorabilia. That’s when you know you’re in a cryptid town. In Fouke, Arkansas, where they filmed *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, they have the Fouke Monster Mart, which is just a regular convenience store but it also has tons of Bigfoot merchandise.”

Ocker’s own approach to his projects is similarly tactile, even if his ultimate format is the printed word. His life as an official “Oddity Chas-

er” began in 2007 with the launch of his website, “Odd Things I’ve Seen” (“OTIS” for short: see oddtthingsiveseen.com). His process when embarking on a project is to visit any and every relevant site, which might mean a horror filming location or a specific piece of art, but in the case of cryptids it meant trips to any town with a statue or a plaque.

“I was going to various cryptid sites anyway,

LYLE BLACKBURN POURS HIS CRYPTID PASSION INTO A NEW PODCAST

THE MONSTRO WE KNOW

BY OWEN WILLIAMS

AUTHOR, MUSICIAN, FILMMAKER, LONG-TIME *RUE MORGUE* COLUMNIST... you'd think cryptid connoisseur Lyle Blackburn would have been hosting a podcast long before now. His audience, he tells us, has been clamouring for one for years, but when you're a multi-hyphenate creator of content, sometimes it's hard to find the time. That time has finally arrived, however, with Blackburn's *Monstro Bizarro* podcast: an aural tour of America's cryptozoological backwaters and peculiar small-town histories.

"Obviously at this point in the game there are a lot of podcasts, and a lot in this genre," he tells *Rue Morgue*. "Literally every name I came up with was already a podcast title, which is why I went back to the name of my *Rue Morgue* column. There was nothing else named that!"

The format, he says, has been a process of trial and error, and he ultimately abandoned trying to fit in guests or a co-host, eschewing those familiar, looser formats in favour of something more formal and scripted. Perhaps appropriately, for a subject rooted in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, *Monstro Bizarro* lovingly evokes old radio broadcasts and lurid television pseudo-documentaries.

"Where I'm coming from with it is very much influenced by Leonard Nimoy," Blackburn explains. "He hosted a show called *In Search Of...* back in the '70s, and of course I'm a huge fan of *The Twilight Zone* and Rod Serling. In my wrap-ups, I'll say things like 'This could only happen in the world of *Monstro Bizarro*...' which is total *Twilight Zone*. I wanted that classic sort of front-man narrator. You have that format of the opening, then the story, and then the wrap-up and it's very much a format in which I can repeat things, even though *yet again* it's a mystery

that can't be solved."

While the voice is unmistakably Blackburn's, he employs a spookily ominous intonation for the podcast that isn't quite his laconic conversational Texan drawl. The narrator is very much a character he's playing – The Cryptid Keeper, if you will – who you might imagine sitting in a leather armchair in front of a roaring fire. He often refers to his "files," suggesting a library full of leatherbound volumes.

"I think all of us cryptid researchers and monster hunters like to imagine our *files*," Blackburn says with a chuckle, "but in today's world, it's more like folders on the desktop. But I do have newspaper clippings and notebooks, and I do refer to them."

He also has witness interviews going back years, some clips of which, he says, he may use in the future as he finesses the format. He's also already played around with some short dramatized sections, like the 911 call in the "Terror of Teague" episode.

"It's a bit of fun getting my friends to do these things," says Blackburn, "and they always say they can't do it, and end up sounding just fine! Again, I like the idea of creating that creepy vintage radio atmosphere, like Orson Welles. Going forward, I think I'll do more of those."

Researching, writing, recording, and performing each episode is clearly a considerable commitment, but Blackburn says he's happy to continue as long as the audience shows up – which so far it has, even in

these early stages.

"I love writing books, but I'm happy to go wherever the demand is," he reasons. "So far, the episodes have been monthly. I may try and get that down to three weeks, but I don't want to over-pledge!" 🧐





All Photos: Ocker Family

Snake In The Grass: Despite Wyoming being a few hundred miles from any ocean, the Silver Lake Sea Serpent has been the subject of local legend since 1855.

but not with any kind of purpose,” he reflects, “but writing this book got me started in earnest, trying to get to everywhere I could.”

He adds that an undertaking like this – or that of his previous book on Edgar Allan Poe, 2014’s *Poe-Land* – typically becomes all-consuming for a year or more, eating up every weekend road trip and hijacking every family vacation.

“New England has a lot of cryptids,” he says. “The Lake Champlain monster is a big one, and there are Bigfoots in every state so they’re easy to find. New York is an easy weekend trip and I still have family in DC, and then I just burned event money on flights out to places like the Dakotas.”

Sadly, for all that distance covered, Ocker has never once had a cryptid encounter of his own. In Point Pleasant, West Virginia – town of the Mothman – he took his twelve-year-old daughter out Mothman-hunting in the woods in the middle of the night, where they saw some odd lights in the distance, but he laughs that it was probably just other enthusiasts with flashlights who got scared and ran back to their car.

“Most of the time I’m hunting cryptids for the book I’m just going downtown looking for local monster-themed craft beers,” he says, “but in this one case I actually felt like I was looking for a monster, because it was midnight, it was

dark, there are these echoey dark stone igloos that are just covered in graffiti and mosquitos everywhere, and it was scary! But I’ve never once had an experience that seemed to me to denote something supernormal. Maybe I’m too closed off or sixth-sense-blind. That’s why I love towns making a big deal of these things, because even though I can’t see Bigfoot, I’ve seen probably two dozen Bigfoot statues. I’ve seen artist’s renditions of every monster. So there’s stuff to go and see.”

Having never witnessed a cryptid, however, begs the question of whether it’s possible to believe in things unseen.

“My big conflict in these projects is that I don’t believe in the paranormal at all,” says Ocker, not particularly ruefully. “I’m not a skeptic with a capital S – I’ve just never seen anything. But I still love the stories. The beauty of cryptids is that, even though I don’t believe in it, that doesn’t mean that something didn’t happen to those people in Arkansas in the 1970s. Even if it was a figment of their imagination or a prankster, there were still hunting parties looking for it. Something happened that scared that town for two weeks. That’s different from the paranormal, which is maybe about an

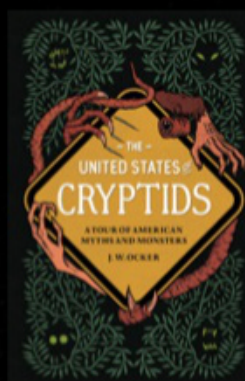
individual house or family. With cryptids you’ve got documented, day-by-day accounts of entire towns. There’s a level of realness to it that the rest of the paranormal doesn’t get to play with.”

And most important of all, Ocker has found that the people who are drawn to the topic particularly at cryptid conventions are, in his words, pretty awesome.

“It’s not because they necessarily believe in cryptids,” he says, “but they just love them. It’s their common currency, their secret password. If you know the word ‘hodag’ you can be their friend. Those are my guys. There’s not many people you can talk about space clams with.”

He also points to the work of artists who thrive in the field and who’ve allowed their talent and imaginations to run wild thanks to the fact that there’s no definitive visual representation of a thunderbird, a Pukwudgie, or a Wampahoofus.

“It’s a really amazing community that I wish I could’ve been plugged into more,” says Ocker, “but a lot of events were cancelled over the last couple of years because of COVID. But I’ll be on the circuit now with a vengeance, so I’m looking forward to talking monsters with people again – if they like my book, I guess!” 🧐





20 YEARS OF TERROR

BLUE
UNDERGROUND
www.blue-underground.com

©2022 Blue Underground, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



facebook.com/BlueUndergroundFilms



Twitter: @blunderground

DIABOLIK
DVD

Available at www.DIABOLIKDVD.com and other fine video retailers

FORTY YEARS AGO THIS YEAR, PACIFIC COMICS DEBUTED TWISTED TALES, ONE OF THE LESSER KNOWN AND BEST-KEPT SECRETS AMONGST FANS OF COMIC BOOK HORROR

CRUESOME

BY **CHRISTOPHER BEVARD**

WHILE THE INFAMOUS E.C. COMICS SET THE ETERNAL BAR FOR SPLASH-PANEL TERROR IN THE 1950s and pub-

lisher James Warren held court over the 1960s and 1970s, horror comics of the early 1980s were briefly and quietly defined by an independent comic known as *Twisted Tales*, a title that still enjoys a healthy cult following in spite of a tragically short run. The brainchild of writer Bruce Jones and upstart publisher Pacific Comics, *Twisted Tales* set a new kind of standard for comic book horror, and Jones' work remains some of the finest the genre has ever seen. This year marks the 40th anniversary of *Twisted Tales*' debut issue – surely a watershed moment in the world of horror comics – but in spite of numerous E.C., Warren, and other classic reprints over the years (Dark Horse, I'm looking at you!), *Twisted Tales* somehow remains a best-kept secret amongst its cult of fans.

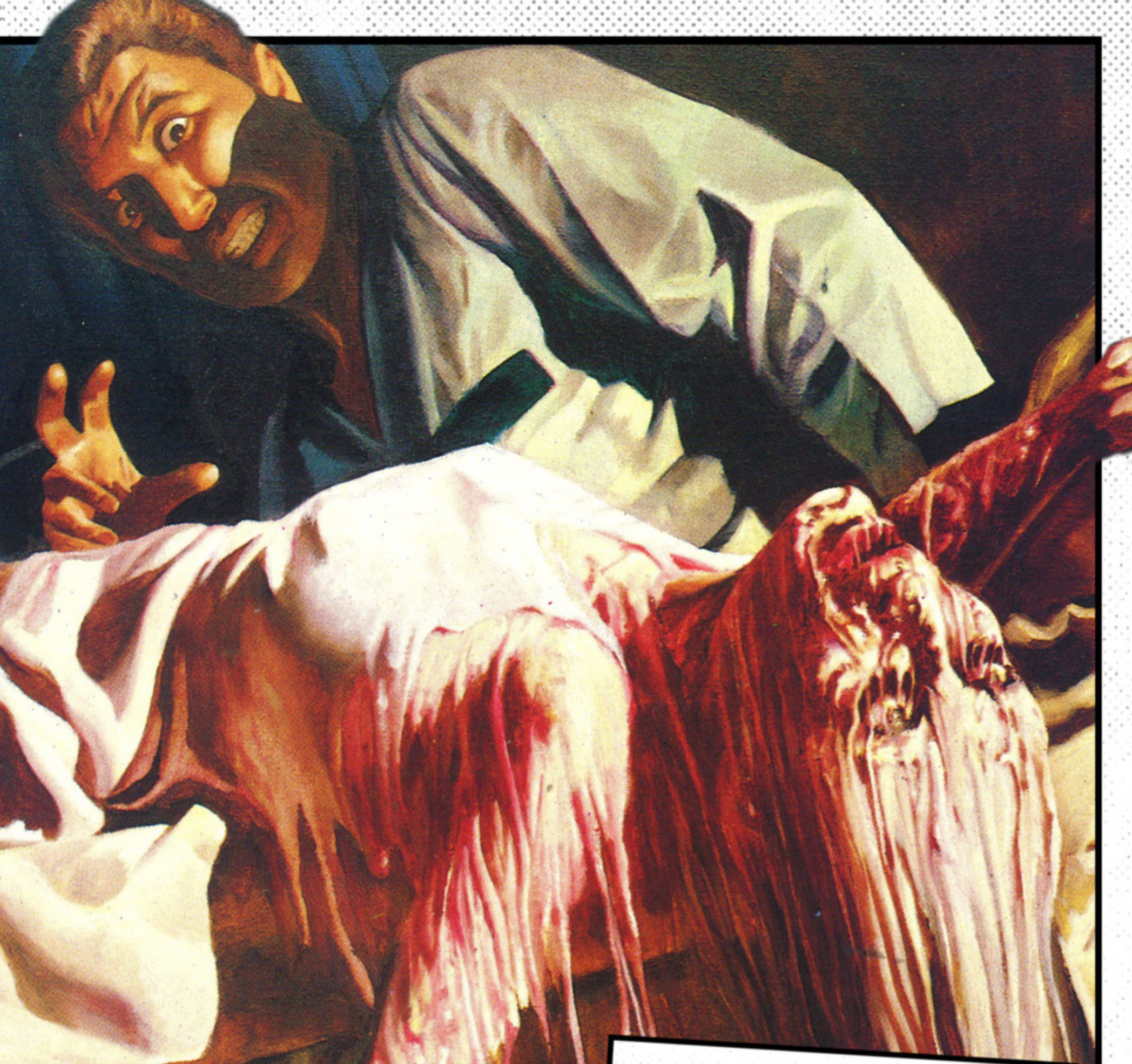
As the 1970s came to a close, stalwart horror magazines such as Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* had begun declining in popularity and sales, and the salacious wave of underground "comix" from the early '70s, including *Slow Death*, *Fantagor*, and *Death Rattle*, had long since vanished from the racks. Aside from a few cheaply produced Charlton reprints here and there, there were few titles to satisfy the horror fan who wanted material in line with Warren's heyday. The time was right for something new, especially consider-

ing the talent Warren had cultivated over the previous decade (some of whom had clandestinely worked for Warren rival Skywald in the early '70s under pseudonyms). Artists like Richard Corben and Bernie Wrightson had become icons for some of the most memorable images Warren ever published, and while the publisher had an assemblage of strong writers in its stable, none stood out like Bruce Jones. A Kansas City native and lifelong fan of sci-fi and horror, Jones set his sights on working with Warren after moving to New York, but there was a slight problem.

"None of the editors up there cared for my work," recalls Jones, "But I did get to know Jeff Jones, Bernie Wrightson, Mike Kaluta, and those other artists and writers who were in comics in the early '70s. Meanwhile, I did illustration work for the sci-fi digest magazines, wrote short stories for various men's magazines, and did work for the fanzines to keep bread on the table. I continued to court Warren and did work for Marvel as well as Skywald – who were publishing black-and-white horror books like *Nightmare* and *Psycho* – and eventually built up a presence with editors, if not the public."

Warren remained Jones' key target and fortunately for fans of the genre, his prolific nature paid off in the form of one of the finest horror stories to ever grace a comic page. The turning point was a horrifying, psychosexual tale of a man who ends up as the caretaker of a monstrously





deformed young woman named Jenifer, which appeared in *Creepy* #63 (July 1974). The truth is, however, that “Jenifer” almost didn’t happen.

“By 1973 or so, I was fed up and decided to move back to the Midwest,” Jones said. “Just before I left, I took one more swing at Warren with ‘Jenifer.’ Bill DuBay [*Creepy*’s editor] liked that script, but I already had the moving van packed. Back in Kansas City, I did fashion illustration until one day the phone rang: it was Jeff Jones’ wife Louise, who had become editor at Warren. To my shock, ‘Jenifer’ had made something of a splash in New York and she wanted me to become one of her full-time writers.”

Wrightson’s artwork brought the horrific deformities of the title character to life in shadowy, angular frames, and the stunning twist at the end

of the story – one of Jones’ hallmarks – was a showstopper.

“I’ve no idea where the inspiration for ‘Jenifer’ came from,” admits Jones, “and I think its popularity might have something to do with people’s fear of and fixation with sex, but that’s just a guess. To me, it was just another job, another story. I never dreamed it would have so much impact with so many, eventually even becoming a TV movie (part of Mick Garris’ 2005 *Masters of Horror* series in a segment directed by Dario Argento). I just tried to write the best I could and move on to the next assignment.”

Regardless, the doors were now open, and the years that followed made Bruce Jones a sought-after name amongst horror-comic enthusiasts. As the 1980s came into view, shifts in cultural taste and several editorial shakeups at Warren led to an arguable decline in quality at *Creepy* and *Eerie*, and it was clear that the once-great magazine publisher was nearing its end. While companies like Kitchen Sink Comix had stuck around after the underground scene fizzled out in the

earlier part of the 1970s, the reality was grim: there were few independent comic publishers really pursuing horror with any real commitment to the genre. But the groundwork for a new model in comic distribution – as well as a new kind of ownership for the creators themselves – had been laid a few years earlier by two teenagers from California who would go on to change the comics industry forever.

Enter Bill and Steve Schanes, brothers and comic store owners from San Diego who, as literal teenagers, had started their own retail, publishing, and distribution company called Pacific Comics. The Schanes brothers' idea was radical at the time: a comic company that offered both creator ownership and royalties, giving their talent the opportunity to curate and release work that wasn't sanitized for a younger audience. Pacific's mission was to put comic books in the hands of adults who had outgrown the superhero titles of their youth and wanted something edgier. (The disruptive nature of this in 1981 cannot be overstated; the Pacific model opened the door for the modern-day comic industry and its seemingly endless number of indie publishers, and it also presented an opportunity to push the boundaries of what could be done in a comic book.)

"The Schanes brothers offered to let me and April [Jones-Campbell, Jones' wife and editor] work with them and wondered if I had any ideas," recalls Jones on the unlikely situation that led to the creation of *Twisted Tales*. "I did, but having seen some of my best stuff mauled in New York, I agreed to work with them on *my* terms. I wanted to be the writer, designer, and editor with my choice of artists and to have complete control over my own line of books. Amazingly, they agreed."

Fortunately for Jones, this type of creator-driven artistic control was exactly in line with the Schanes' vision of a new way to approach comic publishing. Under the Schanes deal, Jones and Campbell would be given the chance to write what they wanted, hire the artists they wanted, and submit finished work for publication without any additional, substantial editorial oversight. With a deal in hand, Jones and Campbell relocated to San Diego and went to work. From 1982 to 1985, the pair would almost single-handedly deliver stellar titles on a near-monthly basis; *Alien Worlds*, *Silverheels*, *Pathways to Fantasy*, and the *Somerset Holmes* miniseries helped Pacific's rise as an upstart in the independent comic scene. But it was *Twisted Tales* and its cocktail of gruesome monsters, murderers, and dark sexuality that, arguably, remain the strongest part of Pacific's legacy: a lurid, brightly coloured deep-dive into the darkest, most depraved corners of human psychology and the supernatural that gave a passing nod to the classic twist endings of E.C. and Warren... and then sharpened their teeth.

While magazines like *Creepy* featured "adult"



Truly Twisted: Panel – "Jenifer" (*Creepy* #63) opposite panel – "Hooked" (TT#7), Richard Corben cover (TT#1), Bernie Wrightson cover (TT#2) and John Bolton cover (TT#4).

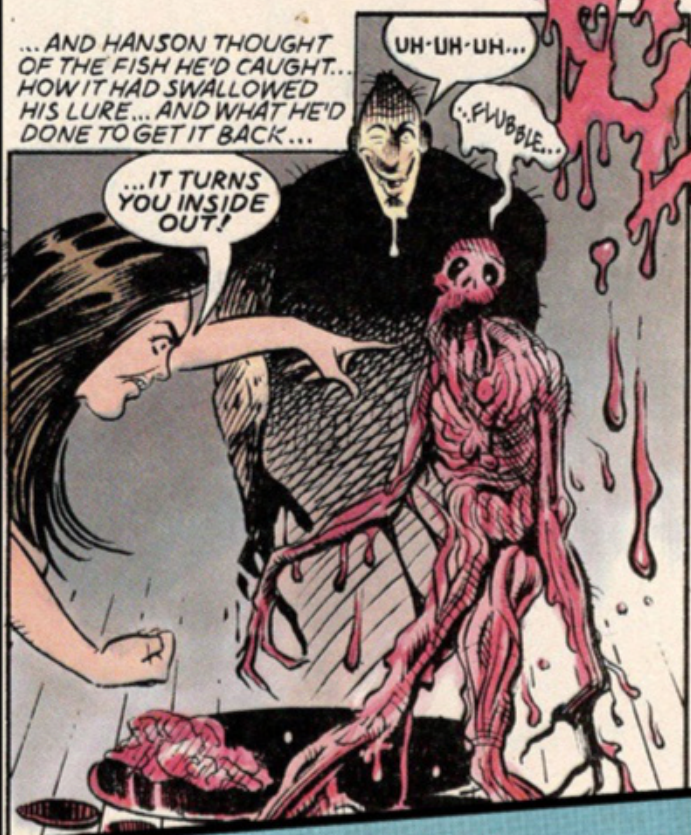
stories like "Jenifer," they also relied on the framing device of an E.C.-like narrator known as Uncle Creepy, who offered slimy puns and jokes to offset the real horror and unify the stories in each issue of his magazine, making it palpable for a broader (i.e. younger) audience, at some level. By contrast, each issue of *Twisted Tales* seemed to exist in frightening isolation, devoid of framing or context, and the stories often felt like scenes excised from someone's existential nightmare. E.C.'s most recognized stories were largely morality plays – someone does someone else wrong, which ensures that the offender falls victim to grotesque, supernatural justice in the end. But Jones' protagonists are often just victims of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – a narrative device that leaves the stories feeling all too real... or even plausible. Penning 33 of the 40 stories published in *Twisted Tales'* ten issues was no small feat, and when it came

to the twist ending, few horror writers could hope to aspire to Jones' level of shock.

"I usually began with an idea that had some kind of grab-you opening," he explains. "I wasn't always aware of the middle part, but I almost always knew the ending. I never planned too far ahead with outlines, note cards – I liked to wing it and make it as surprising to me as it was to the reader; the off-centre approach helped to keep it fresh."

Part of what made *Twisted Tales* exciting was its reluctance to rely on the standard – and arguably tired – tropes of the comic horror story at that point in time while exploring all manner of the weird and frightening. Monsters were plentiful, from the slimy sewer dweller at the heart of "Way Down There Below in the Dark" (TT#8) to the monstrous, malformed child of "Hooked" (TT#7) to the undead trick-or-treaters of "All Hallow's" (TT#1, adapted in 2019 for AMC's *Creep-*

HANSON REMEMBERED THE THING ON THE BEACH THEN... REALIZED WHO IT WAS AND WHY IT HAD LOOKED THAT WAY...



show TV series). Disturbed minds were also a frequent focus of *TT*'s "gotcha" moments, from the dinosaur-obsessed farm boy in "Me and Ol' Rex" (*TT*#3) to a murderous widow's trophies in "Holly's Hobby" (*TT*#7), to the sex-crazed dream killer in "You, Illusion" (*TT*#6). "Banjo Lessons" (*TT*#5), perhaps the most infamous tale in Jones' portfolio besides "Jennifer." It offers a deeply unsettling look at repressed sexuality and bigotry, and served both as a unique throwback to E.C.'s social commentary in the 1950s and a look forward to the more complex adult themes that were starting to creep into the world of comics in general. The only issue to come with a disclaimer, *Twisted Tales* #5 featured an introduction by Jones-Campbell addressing the story's sensitive subject matter. Diving wholly into themes of racism, homosexuality, and cannibalism, "Banjo Lessons" remains, after nearly 40 years, a shocking example of comic storytelling.

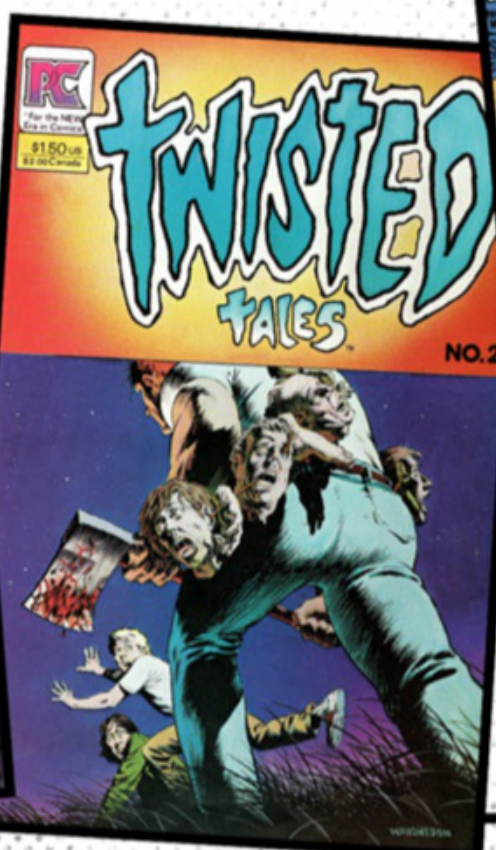
Of course, no comic book can lodge itself in one's brain without artwork that captures its subject matter in breathtaking clarity, and *Twisted Tales* boasted a who's who of the best horror comic artists of the day: Richard Corben, Bernie Wrightson, and John Bolton were series regulars, and each put their unique stamp on Jones' tales of sex and violence. Pacific's groundbreaking approach to quality output also led to their use of heat-press printing, which allowed for stronger, more vibrant colours that didn't bleed on the page (a frequent issue in cheaper, cold-press comic printing at the time). Combined with heavier paper stock, this approach offered, in Schanes' words, "books that just had a different presence to them on the shelf." The quality of the printing

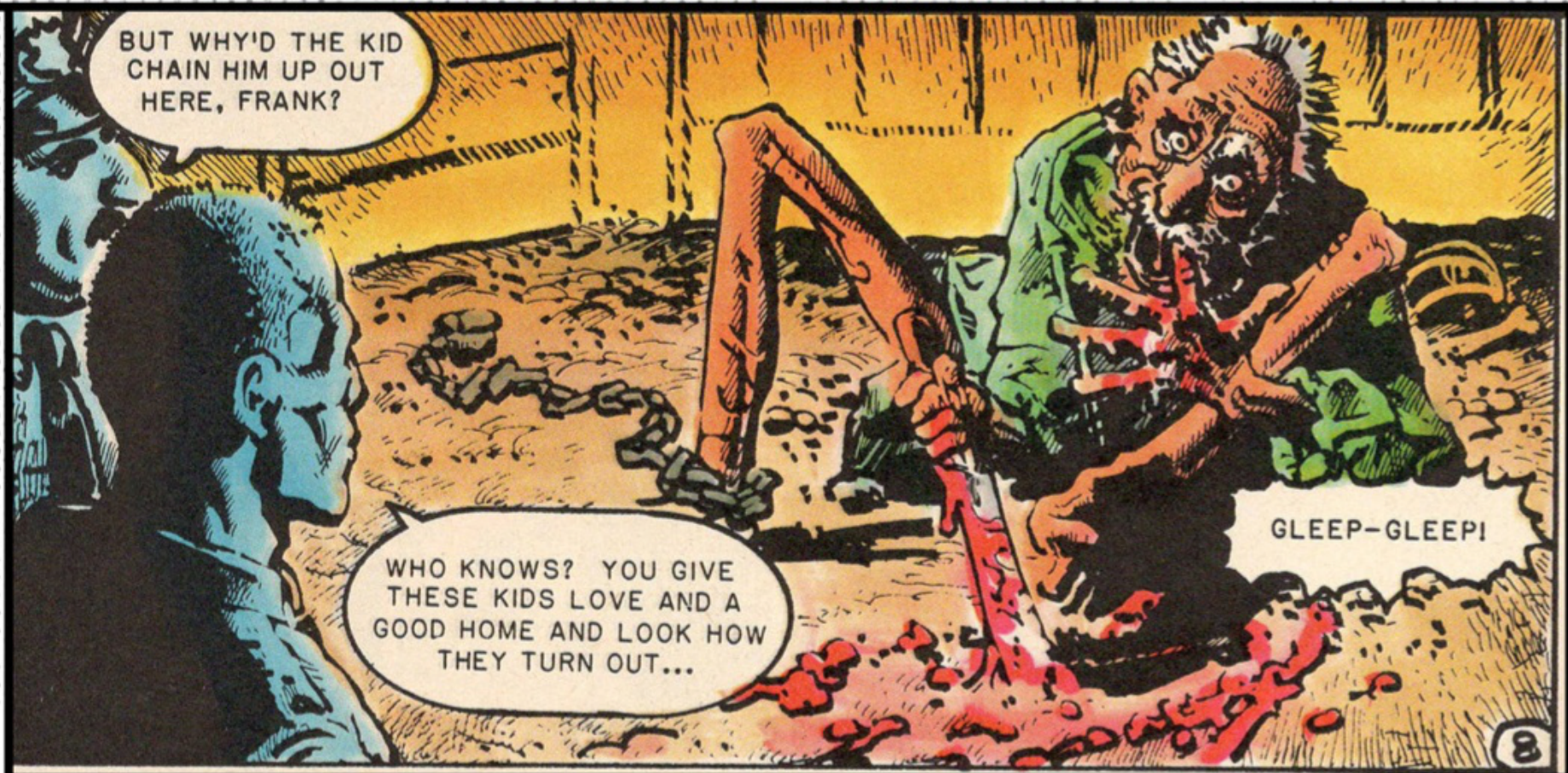
helped offer a greater sense of realism and a truer reproduction of the artists' unique visions – look no further than the leering, mutilated face of an alien creature's hapless victim on the cover of *Twisted Tales* #4. The cover story, "The Well," offered readers one of many stellar collaborations between Jones and Bolton.

Indeed, Pacific often built each issue around the artwork, and the use of laser-separated colour as well as the heat-press method allowed for far higher quality than other comic publishers offered, particularly when combined with heavier paper stock. But of course, high quality often equals high cost and, perhaps inevitably, the back half of 1984 brought trouble to Pacific Comics' publishing arm, as cash flow issues and an uphill battle against larger publishers ultimately led to the dissolution of the company.

The final two issues of *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds* were released under the Eclipse Comics imprint, and Eclipse went on to adopt the same anthology format for their own horror and sci-fi titles, *Tales of Terror* and *Alien Encounters*, with Jones as a frequent contributor. While *Tales of Terror* had flashes of brilliance, the quality of storytelling was at times uneven, and Eclipse pulled the plug on it after a respectable thirteen issues – ironically, to pave the way for a revival of *Twisted Tales* that never quite came to fruition after a 3-D issue from Blackthorne Publishing that reprinted four stories from the Pacific era (1986) and a new, one-off issue from Eclipse (1987).

In many ways, *Twisted Tales* was a product of its time: a perfect storm of talent, form, and opportu-





Classic Tales: (from top) "Me and Ol Rex (TT#3) and "You, Illusion" (TT#6).

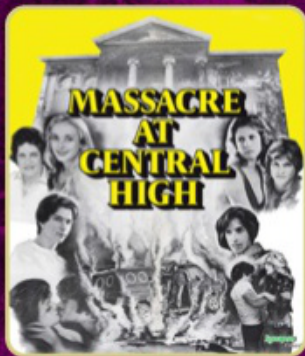
nity given Pacific's vision, Jones' editorial control, and the massive horror boom of the '70s and '80s. Anthology horror, in particular, saw a productive heyday in the 1980s, with Stephen King and George A. Romero birthing *Creepshow* in 1982, followed by a Romero-less *Creepshow 2* in 1987 and numerous other takes on the formula throughout the decade (*Nightmares*, *Deadtime Stories*, and the list goes on). *Tales From the Darkside* (1983-1988) and its successor *Monsters* (1988-1991) terrorized late-night cable television with low budgets and a lot of heart, and Jones himself took the writer's helm – along with wife April – on a supernatural HBO/USA series called *The Hitchhiker* (1983-1991).

While there was brief talk of a *Twisted Tales* television adaptation in 2005 by none other than Todd McFarlane, the project never came to pass.

In the late-1980s, renewed interest in E.C. Comics fuelled by a series of Russ Cochran and Gemstone reprints led to a long-running and highly influential HBO series based on *Tales From the Crypt*, which arguably set the stage for *The Walking Dead* and something of a renaissance in horror comics. Image recently had a successful run with the reality-warping *Gideon Falls*, Joe Hill served as puppet master in a half-dozen horror miniseries for DC's Black Label division (including the spectacular *Dollhouse Family* by M.R. Carey), and serials such as *Something is Killing the Children*, *Killadelphia*, and *Red Room* are enjoying success in 2022. But the anthology formula remains curiously absent from the current comic book landscape; perhaps that will change with the long-awaited debut of Skybound's *Creepshow* miniseries set to premiere this September.

Perhaps the anthology's decline is due to reader interest in ongoing characters and familiar scenarios, or perhaps it's simply due to a need for consistency in quality storytelling that can't be guaranteed – unless your writer is Bruce Jones. And while one could argue that the standard was set in the pre-Code days of the comic industry, one could also reasonably argue that Jones – along with a little help from his friends – perfected the form with *Twisted Tales*. 🍷

THE NEWEST & GNARLIEST HORROR, CULT, & NOIR



MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH

When new student David (Derrel Maury) arrives at Central High, he discovers bullies who rule the school with intimidation and violence.

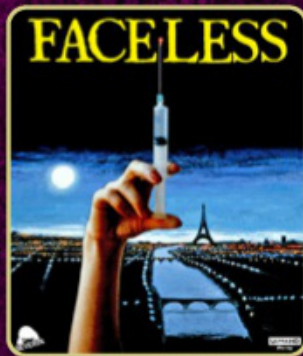
AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



YELLOWBRICKROAD

A team of explorers take a mind-bending trip up a mountain road and find an ancient evil lurking in the New England woods.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY AND DVD



FACELESS

A depraved tale of disfigurement, dismemberment, libidinous brutes, Nazi surgeons, Parisian discos, face-ripping, throat-stabbing & eyeball-piercing.

AVAILABLE ON ULTRA HD AND BLU-RAY



ALL ABOUT EVIL

When a mousy librarian takes over her father's movie theater, grisly murders caught on camera will transform her into the queen of splatter cinema.

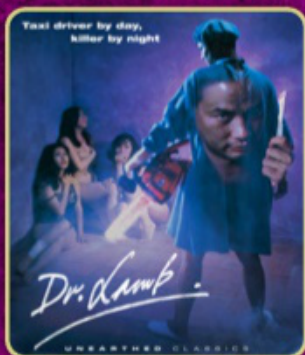
AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



EVIL DEAD TRAP 2: HIDEKI

The evil returns to take hold!

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY AND DVD



DR. LAMB

A crazed taxi driver is on the loose in Hong Kong.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY AND DVD



TERROR AT TENKILLER 4K RESTORATION SPECIAL EDITION

Leslie and Jana are both attractive young ladies, who take off on a vacation and strange things start to happen at their remote cabin in the woods.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



SATAN'S LITTLE HELPER

Nine-year-old Douglas Woolly sees a serial killer in a devil mask creating a Halloween display with his victims and becomes "Satan's Little Helper"!

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



NIGHT AT THE EAGLE INN

Fraternal twins spend a hellish night at the remote inn their father disappeared from the night they were born.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY AND DVD



THE KINDRED

Dr. Amanda Hollins calls on her son John to eliminate all evidence of her genetic experiments, including a monster named "Anthony"!

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS 50TH ANNIVERSARY 4K UHD COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Six friends in a theatrical troupe dig up a corpse on an abandoned island to use in a mock Satanic rite. It backfires with deadly consequences.

AVAILABLE ON ULTRA HD, BLU-RAY AND DVD



CURSE III: BLOOD SACRIFICE

An African witch doctor summons a demon like creature to torture an American and her family.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



DISTURBING BEHAVIOR SPECIAL EDITION

In Cradle Bay, it doesn't matter if you're not perfect. You will be.

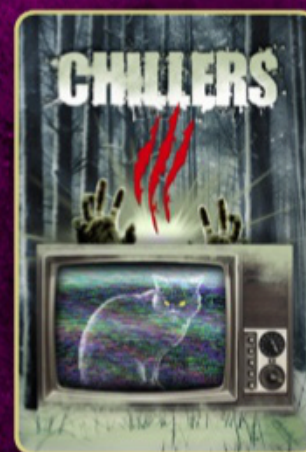
AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY



FROST

A young woman and her estranged father fight to survive after being stranded on a remote mountainside during a winter storm.

AVAILABLE ON BLU-RAY/CD AND DVD




CHILLERS 3

A series of three tales of love gone horribly wrong.

AVAILABLE ON DVD

NOW AVAILABLE AT **MVDSHOP.com**

MVDvisual
A DIVISION OF MVD ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LLC



AN IMMERSIVE JOURNEY INTO THE
NIGHTMARISH HELLSCAPES OF
H.R. GIGER, **SCORN** IS DESIGNED TO TEST
YOUR SANITY... ON EVERY LEVEL

RATED M FOR
MACABRE
BY ANDREA SUBISSATI

Most horror fans are well acquainted with the surrealist work of Swiss artist H.R. Giger, if not for

his vast output of paintings and airbrushed visual art, then for his Academy Award-winning design work on the *Alien* films. Giger's trademark "bio-mechanical" themes – where organic humanoid matter is fused with the cold steel of industrial machinery – have been adopted across many visual mediums throughout the man's working life and beyond, further cementing his singular style in art history; often imitated, but never duplicated. His is a world where metal pipes course like arteries toward motor centres with alien heartbeats, where cyberpunk environs breed liminal creatures that border on the obscene, where the uncanny valley is explored to its deepest depths. This fall, a new atmospheric horror video game invites you to inhabit Giger's hellscape on a whole new level; welcome to the world of *Scorn*.

Officially announced by Serbian developer Ebb Software in 2014, footage released from the pre-alpha build took viewers on a first-person tour along corridors resembling spinal columns, through gateways of reptilian maws, and through acrid atmospheres where nightmare creatures dwell half-embedded in the landscape. The teaser trailer had horror gamers salivating from their double-mandibles, but a failed crowdfunding campaign saw *Scorn*'s production shelved in limbo for years, joining the famed *PT* as a highly anticipated title that somehow failed to make it to completion in spite of great promise and on-line hype. But that promise was never forgotten, and a surprise announcement at the Xbox Series X software showcase in May of 2020 revealed that development had been revived thanks to an infusion of funding from Microsoft and *Scorn* would be released in October 2022 for Xbox and PC.

"It was an everyday struggle, with so many pitfalls and variables," says *Scorn* creative director and Ebb CEO Ljubomir Peklar, on the game's tumultuous journey from concept to completion. "Everything from organising and design to budget was constantly in flux [so] it feels like a miracle that we are actually at the end of the production."

Details around *Scorn*'s gameplay remain strategically mysterious, but the latest trailer (narrated by Pinhead himself, Doug Bradley) hints that the less we know, the better. Even the identity of the playable protagonist is unclear – from the first-person perspective, electronic implants embedded in our arms suggest that our very nature is among the game's many mysteries. Awakening lost and disoriented in "an industrial civilization lying in decay and ruin," players must explore the game's macabre world without the aid of cutscenes or dialogue, by simply observing, experimenting, and interacting with themed areas designed to tax you emotionally as well as tactically.

Peklar explains: "If we use the 'Field of De-



cay' [level] as an example, with its gigantic looming buildings peering through the fog, its atmosphere should leave players with a feeling of loneliness and insignificance, but that may not be the case for everyone. That is why different areas and their specific feel and themes are left for the players to unravel."

Thus, gamers must be attentive to *Scorn*'s environmental details that provide the only clues to overcome its many puzzles and obstacles. Observing patterns and learning the game's own logic language is essential to progression and

survival; everything is implied through visuals and sound and that includes distinguishing friends from foes amid the native fauna. Danger lurks around every corner of this waking nightmare, with Lovecraftian mutant creatures that not only inhabit the place but function as part of its eerie ecosystem.

"Most of the inhabitants of the

“WE WANTED TO AVOID THE FAKE FEELING OF EVERY ENCOUNTER BEING DESIGNED WITH ONLY THE PLAYER IN MIND.”

SCORN CREATIVE DIRECTOR LJUBOMIR PEKLAR



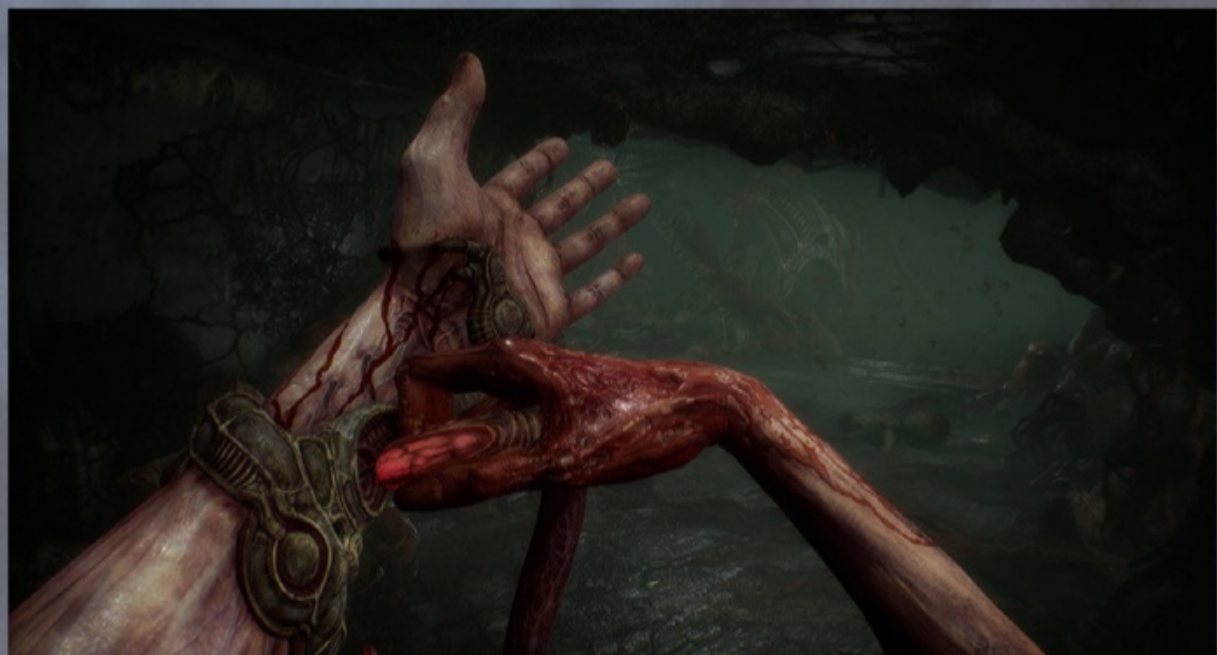
world become hostile if you disturb their routine,” warns Peklar. “We wanted to avoid the fake feeling of every encounter being designed with only the player in mind.”

Indeed, this isn't your average shooter where abundant weapons and ammo see the player mowing down monsters, *Duke Nukem*-style. Rather, resources are few and far between, forcing players to exercise as much ingenuity and survival instinct as stealth.

“*Scorn* is an experience with horror at its core, so when it comes to the scarcity of ammo, limiting ammo is a simple way to ensure the player doesn't become overpowered,” affirms Peklar. “Too much ammo and the experience would feel more like an action game. Likewise, the experience becomes far more one-dimensional and less interesting with no ammo at all.

“The feelings of security and confidence from wielding a weapon can be shattered instantly when ammo runs out or something jams unexpectedly,” he continues. “Scarcity of ammunition or restrictive inventory space can significantly impact short-term decisions regarding fight or flight. These interactions change the way that players feel about their environments and invoke feelings of tension or discomfort.”

But that's not to say that *Scorn* leaves us completely helpless in its hostile hellscape, although the game's weaponry is as surreal as its setting. Players will encounter the usual arsenal of pistols, shotguns, and grenade launchers, but tweaked to



reflect the game's interior logic, and intended to be used for very specific purposes. More unique forms of armament involve plunging your raw fist into an anatomical modular base made up of bio-mechanical machinery, fuelled by organic pods, that clamps inexorably on your arm.

“The initial tool you receive is definitely the most interesting because it has many elements to it,” says Peklar. “Although it can be used as an effective weapon, it must be done at close range. Use it for too long, and the tool can overheat.”

Furthering *Scorn*'s emphasis on disorientation and existential dread is an original score composed by Serbian musician Wikluh Sky, who also composed the pulsing score for Srdjan Spasojevic's controversial 2010 horror debut, *A Serbian Film*. Also contributing to the soundtrack are Bosnian drum and bass producer Billain, and Welsh industrial musician Lustmord.

“With the sound, we wanted to echo the

specific themes like wonder, emptiness, and loss — every tone used was designed to convey such feelings,” asserts Peklar. “Lustmord was a no-brainer decision as he is a master of producing ritualist primordial sounds that you really feel in your core. Sound plays a huge part in setting the tone for a visceral horror experience and working with Lustmord helped us to create a soundscape that builds both tension and dread.”

While most of *Scorn*'s secrets remain shrouded in a fog of mystery, Doug Bradley's invitation to “unravel” ourselves within its world of horror is a tantalizing one. To refuse, as he might say, would be a waste of good suffering. 🩸

SON OF MONSTERPALOOZA™

BURBANK, CALIFORNIA • OCTOBER 14-16
MARRIOTT BURBANK CONVENTION CENTER
FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS, CALL (818) 843-6000



TOMMY LEE WALLACE
HALLOWEEN,
HALLOWEEN III (DIRECTOR)



SANDY JOHNSON
HALLOWEEN



NICK CASTLE
HALLOWEEN,
ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK



TOM ATKINS
HALLOWEEN III,
THE FOG, CREEPSHOW



JAMES JUDE COURTNEY
HALLOWEEN (2018-2022)



JENNIFER RUBIN
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM
STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS



ILAN MITCHELL-SMITH
WEIRD SCIENCE,
SUPERBOY



ANTHONY MICHAEL HALL
WEIRD SCIENCE,
HALLOWEEN KILLS



SHERILYN FENN
TWIN PEAKS,
WILD AT HEART, RAY DONOVAN



SHERYL LEE
TWIN PEAKS,
VAMPIRES, WILD AT HEART

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE NOW!

FRIDAY: \$30 SATURDAY: \$35 SUNDAY: \$30 - THREE DAY: \$75

Weekend of show: \$40
Weekend of show: \$35
Goblin Makeup by: Jason Collins of Autonomous FX

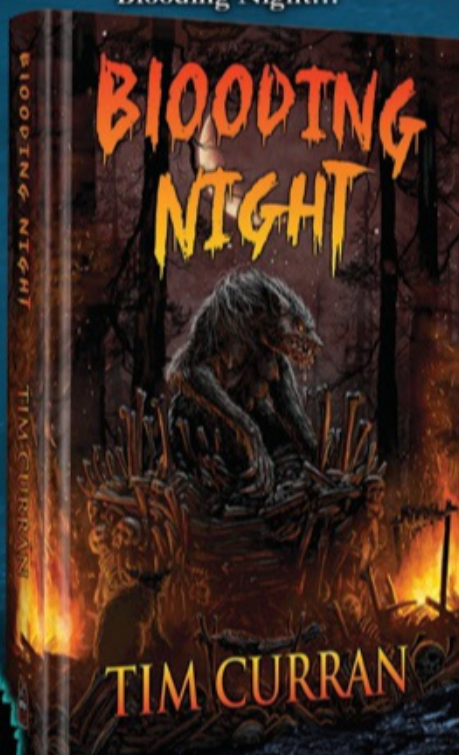
**OVER 150 VENDORS, CELEBRITY GUESTS, SPECIAL EXHIBITS,
MAKEUP DEMOS, PRESENTATIONS & MORE!**

*ALL GUESTS ARE TENTATIVE

WWW.MONSTERPALOOZA.COM

Signed and numbered hardcover editions! The best in weird horror fiction!

Only one can survive.
The most cunning one.
Only she can be the bride of
Blooding Night...



H. P. Lovecraft's fabled character,
Alhazred, the Mad Arab who wrote
the infamous Necronomicon is back
with new and startling tales of sword
and sorcery, horror, and adventure.



A unique and fascinating
Gothic Fairy Tale Collection!



www.weirdhousepress.com

CINEMACABRE

FILM + DVD + REISSUES



MEMENTO ARGENTO

DARK GLASSES

Starring Ilenia Pastorelli, Asia Argento and Andrea Gherpelli
Directed by Dario Argento
Written by Dario Argento and Franco Ferrini
Shudder

The name Dario Argento conjures up brilliantly coloured, dark, artistic, violent films. One could argue the director single-handedly defined the *giallo* genre through films like *Suspiria* (1977) and *Opera* (1987), but recent years have seen his work move away from artsy and brutal horror to straight up campy schlock. Originally written in 2002, *Occhiali neri* (*Dark Glasses*) had been shelved due to the bankruptcy of the production company that had optioned it. Now, it promises Argento's highly anticipated return to his *giallo* roots after a ten-year sabbatical.

The film opens with sex worker Diana (Ilenia Pastorelli) stopping her car to watch an eclipse that's plunging Rome into darkness. Diana has become the latest target of

a serial killer, who tries to mow her down in a white van, killing everyone but seven-year-old Chin (Andrea Zhang). Much of the film centres on Diana adapting to her new life when she wakes up to the harsh reality that she will be blind forever as a result of the accident. She navigates her new existence with the help of disability coach Rita (Asia Argento) and her service dog, Nerea. The most compelling character, Chin, escapes from an orphanage to hide out with Diana. But the killer is still on the loose, and he has unfinished business with the pair.



Occhiali neri feels like a half-realized idea, setting itself up from the start to hearken back to Argento's glory days, but as the film progresses, it wavers into camp without the payoff of a good camp film. Set pieces begging to be used creatively (such as an abandoned dam operator's cabin) get cast aside and the final showdown feels abrupt and uninspired. After a strong and promising opening, it's disappointing.

Dario Argento may have set out to make his own *Manhunter*, but ended up with *Red Dragon*.

HATE MIOR

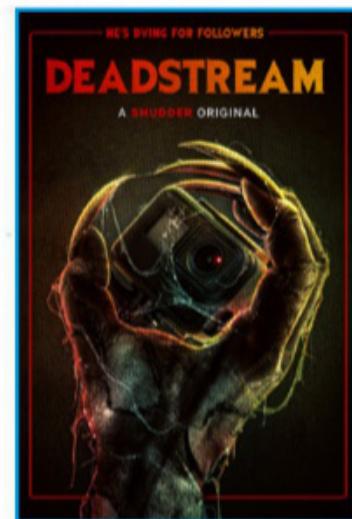
STREAM & SCREAM

DEADSTREAM

Starring Joseph Winter and Melanie Stone
Written and directed by Vanessa Winter and Joseph Winter
Shudder

A frequent and inexplicable flaw of the found-footage genre is when the protagonists wielding or in front of the cameras are insufferable jerks, which tends to kill viewer engagement. It's the significant achievement of *Deadstream* that filmmakers Vanessa and Joseph Winter not only keep us involved with its overweening hero's plight, but are able to make the now decades-old terror-*vérité* formula seem fresh.

As the title suggests, this is one of the new breed of hand-held horrors in which the footage we're watching is allegedly a livestream, complete with a procession of viewer comments in the margins. Joseph Winter stars as the host, Shawn Ruddy, who heads into the haunted Pratt House with a full array of camera and computer gear. His livelihood took



a severe hit six months prior when a prank went horribly wrong, and he hopes to jumpstart it by documenting what promises to be a spooky night locked in this spooky site. He's a cocky, narcissistic dude, yet Winter laces his performance with satiric takes on the new breed of online "celebrities" to keep you amused and watching, waiting for Shawn to receive his inevitable comeuppance.

What you might not expect during *Deadstream*'s first act is how jumpy and tense the movie will become once the presences dwelling within the Pratt House emerge, without losing its sense of humour. Pacing it well via intercutting between multiple camera points of view and some unexpected story turns, the Winters' trap us in there with Shawn, who manages to elicit our sympathy as he realizes he's in deep over his head. The comments stream provides entertaining counterpoints to the action and even occasionally helps build the suspense, which is further enhanced by the old-fashioned synth score. Unlike many films of its ilk – and actual livestreams – this is one you'll want to watch to the very end.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

HOLD ON FOR DEER LIFE

A WOUNDED FAWN

Starring Sarah Lind, Josh Ruben and Malin Barr
Directed by Travis Stevens
Written by Nathan Faudree and Travis Stevens
Shudder

Inspired by a classic Greek tale of vengeance with sprinklings of *The Strangers*, *Evil Dead*, and *Donnie Darko*, *A Wounded Fawn* is a surreal bloodfest that sees Josh Ruben (of recent horror hits *Scare Me* and *Werewolves Within*) as a serial killer that takes the form of a giant red fawn. It's a bizarre enough conceit that would, in lesser hands, make a movie fall flat, but it's just spooky enough here to have fun.



When Bruce (Ruben) invites Meredith (Sarah Lind) to his cabin for the weekend, she accepts without hesitation. She's

just gotten out of a toxic relationship, after all, and Bruce seems like a great guy. We know that he's actually a demented murderer who kills at the behest of an otherworldly being, but the fun is in the tension as Meredith slowly puts the pieces together. With the simple slasher set-up established, Bruce is confronted by all his misdeeds and mis-murders, sending him into an surreal chase sequence that resembles a Kate Bush music video.

A Wounded Fawn is an ambitious film, to say the least, that attempts to turn horror tropes on their heads by forcing the audience into the anguished mind of the antagonist for extended periods of time rather than the tired slasher approach of a chase sequence before the Final Girl strikes back. For her part, Meredith is a convincing and competent character, with just enough rationality and vulnerability to root for. The second act dissolves into a fever dream of surrealism, but competent filmmaking keeps the audience rooted in the frights so that nothing unfolding in that archetypal cabin in the woods seems hokey. Overall, *A Wounded Fawn* is a fabulous and freaky fantasia that tells an entertaining story gushing with adoration for the horror genre.

JUSTIN MCDEVITT



ITCHIN' FOR A BITCHIN'

BITCH ASS

Starring Teon Kelley, Me'lisa Sellers and Tunde Laleye
Directed by Bill Posley
Written by Jonathan Colomb and Bill Posley
Quiver Distribution

Serving as our host during the brief introduction to *Bitch Ass*, Tony Todd invokes the names of past African-American horror classics from *Blacula* to his own *Candyman*. That's a pretty high bar to set for the movie to follow – one it doesn't really clear, though not for lack of ambition.



Of the films Todd namechecks, *Bitch Ass* most directly recalls Wes Craven's *The People Under the Stairs*. With his college prospects looking dubious, high-schooler Quentin, a.k.a. 'Q' (Teon Kelley), is convinced to join three other youths in a gang initiation that has them breaking into the foreboding abode of local urban legend "Bitch Ass" (Tunde Laleye). Once a sensitive soul named Cecil, Bitch Ass was abused by his grandmother and bullied

by his peers to the point where he has become a masked human monster, who traps intruders and subjects them to deadly, human-scaled variations on popular (albeit renamed) parlour games like *Operation* and *Jenga*. Director/co-writer Bill Posley makes the games a guiding aesthetic behind *Bitch Ass*' occasional stylistic flourishes,



TRICK OR TREAT STUDIOS
FEAR STREET
OFFICIAL COLLECTION

USE CODE **TOTSUE** TO RECEIVE 10% OFF YOUR NEXT ORDER
AT TRICKORTREATSTUDIOS.COM



OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE SEXTS FROM THE GRAVE

EDGAR ALLAN HOE



POERN

Darkstar Films

Let's talk about one of the things I admire most about horror films – the addition of soft-core porn. Jason, Freddy, and Michael Myers kill horny teenagers for one reason only: so we can watch a bunch of teens get off before they get offed. It only seems natural, then, that someone would take stories by Edgar Allan Poe and add some skin (*Poern*, get it?). The resulting anthology takes on "Ligeia," "William Wilson," and "The Black Cat" along with the lesser known poem "Alone" from a variety of directors who each added their own smutty slant while staying true to the author's tragic romanticism. Alas, I'm sure you're shocked to read that not every outing is a winner, but hey, I've seen worse and that's saying something. *Poern* might not have what it takes to make the late poet's rotting trousers rise in his grave but if low-budget avant-garde smut with a genre twist is your bag, then consider this one Lance approved!

BODY COUNT: 7

SEX SCENE COUNT: 14

HYDE YOUR DAUGHTERS



HYDE'S SECRET NIGHTMARE

Tetro Video

Robert Louis Stevenson's two-faced 1886 horror story has been portrayed in movies a handful of times, but never received the pornographic treatment it deserves... until now. Italian director Domiziano Cristopharo (*House of Flesh Mannequins*, *Doll Syndrome*), takes the tale and spins it on its ample bosom by making the titular scientist a troubled, impotent madman who injects himself with a drug that turns him into a sexually promiscuous woman who then revels in her horniness for as long as the drug lasts before turning back into the depraved maniac looking desperately for his next fix! Clocking in at over two frickin' hours (!) and with more uncircumcised penises than a rabbi would see at a 24-hour bris-a-thon, *Hyde's Secret Nightmare* might be low on the gore score but more than makes up for it with the jizz fizz!

BODY COUNT: 8

SEX SCENE COUNT: 14

HOT FOR COLD



NEKROLOGY

Black Mafia Films

What would a sex-filled horror film be without a little necrophilia? Well, how about a whole bunch of necrophilia then? That's exactly what you're in store for in this depraved anthology that features a fistful of shorts from directors around the world. *Nekrology* kicks off with a few quick little ditties about unrequited love, stalking, kidnapping, murder, and fucking – while others are unique takes on Edgar Allan Poe stories or '80s-style slasher trailers. The quality, editing, and soundtracks are a mishmash of different styles, as are the varying levels of directorial and acting competence. But they've all got one thing in common: a corpse gets sexually defiled, whether it be by a faceless serial killer, a pudgy older gent, or a sultry pocket-sized punk girl. There's truly something here for everybody, dead or alive!

BODY COUNT: 13

SEX SCENE COUNT: 8

LAST CHANCE LANCE

and also plays with aspect ratios and otherwise does his best to give the movie a distinctive visual identity.

There's less attention paid, unfortunately, to developing the socio-racial themes that he and co-scripter Jonathan Colomb bring up but only glancingly explore in the midst of the carnage. The cast is enthusiastic, and the movie delivers some effective dark humour, even as the villain and his torturous activities are never quite as scary as they could or should be. That's in part because the movie seems stranded between making Bitch Ass/Cecil a figure of fear and sympathy, with the scenes revealing his connection to Q's mom Marsia (Me'lisa Sellers) landing stronger, while also attempting to turn him into the next Jigsaw.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

GIRLS WILL BE GHOULS

SISSY

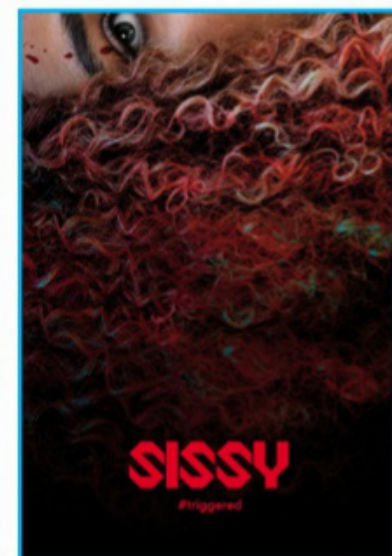
Starring Aisha Dee, Hannah Barlow and Emily De Margheriti

Written and directed by Kane Senes and Hannah Barlow
Shudder

The toxicity of social media has, unsurprisingly, become a key theme in horror cinema of late. Joining *Bodies Bodies Bodies* and *Dashcam* among this year's entries is the Australian *Sissy*, which very pointedly skewers both those behaving badly and those posturing at doing good online, while showcasing a group of fine performances. It's also really, seriously gory at times.

"Sissy" is the childhood nickname/insult that Cecilia (Aisha Dee) would prefer to leave in her troubled past. She's now an online influencer dispensing boilerplate self-help advice, though the one she truly seems to be helping is herself – scanning her likes and fawning comments for her own self-gratification. A chance meeting with long-ago BFF Emma (Hannah Barlow), who's about to be married to Fran (Lucy Barrett), leads Emma to invite Cecilia along to a bachelorette weekend at an expansive country house. Former mean girl Alex (Emily De Margheriti), who's still pretty vicious, is none too happy to see Cecilia, and tensions begin to simmer that ultimately boil over into shocking acts of violence.

At *Sissy*'s Fantasia Film Festival screening, writer/directors Barlow and Kane Senes described their movie as the horrific flip side of the Aussie classic *Muriel's Wedding*, and that's a pretty fair assessment. This outcast-strikes-back saga is not a simplistic good-girl-vs-bad-girls narrative; everyone here is flawed, though some try harder to do the right thing than others. Deftly playing with our sympathies while delivering both jolting shocks and plenty of uneasy humour, Senes and Barlow also take keen satirical aim at our social-media-driven culture. Their well-pitched,



BETTEJUICE

VIXEN BY MICHELINE PITT X LA FEMME EN NOIR



TM & © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. (S22)

SIZES XS - 4X

WWW.LAFEMMEENNOIR.NET

SIZES XS - 4X

WWW.MICHELINEPITT.COM

SHORT CUTS



BITE-SIZED FRIGHTS
FOR SMALL APPETITES

ON THE SLAB: SCARY SNICKERS

MAKE A WISH

8:13 mins/YouTube via the [Screamfest channel](#)

What works so well about the humour in Dinh Thai's short film is his ability to subvert a very tired trope into something darkly relatable. When Freddie (Edward Hong) comes home on his birthday, he's horrified to find that his fiancé Lexie (Josephine Chang) has a special guest waiting for him: his high school bully, Brock (Roman Moretti), tied to a chair so that Freddie can enact revenge for years of torture. Naturally, Freddie balks at the idea, and Lexie goes full-on Crazy Girlfriend as she tears up the house in a fit of rage. But when Brock continues to inadvertently remind Freddie of all his terrible deeds in the past, the film takes a turn that reminds us that sometimes the Crazy Girlfriend knows what's up.



BOUSTIFAILLE

17:03 mins/YouTube via [Alter channel](#)

What starts as a simple romantic comedy from director Pierre Mazingarbe quickly turns into a chaotic farce, rife with cannibalism. What makes *Boustifaille* great, though, is that the film doesn't lose its endearing sense of sweetness along the way. When well-meaning boyfriend Karim (Moustafa Benabibout) hides in his girlfriend Daphnée's (Géraldine Martineau) trunk to surprise her on a visit to her parents' house, he's initially heartbroken to realize she's bringing another guy to meet them. As it happens, Daphnée's not cheating on her boyfriend, but her keto diet: her passenger is less a guest for dinner than the main course for her flesh-eating folks. What ensues is pure madcap splatstick, complete with literal finger food, sentient severed heads, and a shootout with the police that still somehow ends with a heartwarming kiss at the end. If only all rom coms were this bloody!

PAGE ONE

7:39 mins/YouTube via [jamtownfilms channel](#)

In a classic case of taking lemons and making lemonade, director Don P. Hooper and writer/star Tarik Davis give us Abel Worthy, a hero who's learned a thing or two about survival from being the token Black guy who dies on page one of every horror movie he's ever worked on. When the zombie apocalypse hits, he's ready to use that wisdom to get out of the situation alive with fellow bit player Mary (Dorcas Davis). Complicating matters, of course, are white co-stars Noah (Joshua Mesnik) and Wendy (Alexandra Turshen) who aren't ready to relinquish their lead roles even though Noah's sharpest weapon is his sense of entitlement, and Wendy is starting to look a little green. It's a terrific send-up of the "Black guy dies first" trope that's ripe to be made into a feature.

BRYAN CHRISTOPHER

heightened tone is complemented by Steve Arnold's colour-saturated cinematography, the poppy production and costume design by Michael Price and Renate Henschke respectively, and Kenneth Lampl's knowingly melodramatic score. Heading a strong cast with great frenemy chemistry, Dee creates an anti-heroine who by turns elicits empathy, fear, pity, and gasps of disbelief, and always holds your attention.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

DON'T TRUST THE NEIGHBOURS

WHO INVITED THEM

Starring Ryan Hansen, Melissa Tang
and Timothy Granaderos

Written and directed by Duncan Birmingham
Shudder

Within the subgenre of home-invasion horror, there's that sub-subcategory in which the intruders seem friendly at first, until they're not. Such a film is *Who Invited Them*, which goes largely for slow-burning psychological creep rather than brutal violence, under the assured handling of first-time feature writer/director Duncan Birmingham.

Birmingham's background includes the comedy series *Blunt Talk*, and *Who Invited Them* is laced with discomfort-based dark humour from its opening scenes.

A housewarming party is essentially an excuse for upwardly mobile Adam (Ryan Hansen) to show off his lavish new Hollywood Hills home, while his wife Margo (Melissa Tang) retreats to the kitchen until the guests have found reasons to go home early. The only attendees left are Tom (Timothy Granaderos) and Sasha (Perry Mattfeld), aptly described by Margo as looking "like they're going to a sexy funeral." Neither she nor Adam can recall inviting them, but they allow the couple to stay for a nightcap – and it becomes evident that Tom and Sasha spent the party sizing up their hosts, as they begin manipulating them into considering and indulging in naughty behaviour, before playing their buried resentments against each other.

Very well-performed by all four leads, *Who Invited Them* steadily raises the emotional stakes as Tom and Sasha reveal their skills at passive-aggressively bringing out sides of Adam and Margo that they'd rather not acknowledge or reveal to each other. At the same time, the questions of the guest couple's endgame, just how far they'll take their exploitation of Adam and Margo's weaknesses, and whether the latter will make it through undamaged build considerable tension. There's an unnecessary subplot involving one of their neighbours, but also a couple of set-ups that have unexpected payoffs.

Who Invited Them successfully expands a familiar awkward situation into one with life-and-death stakes.

MICHAEL GINGOLD



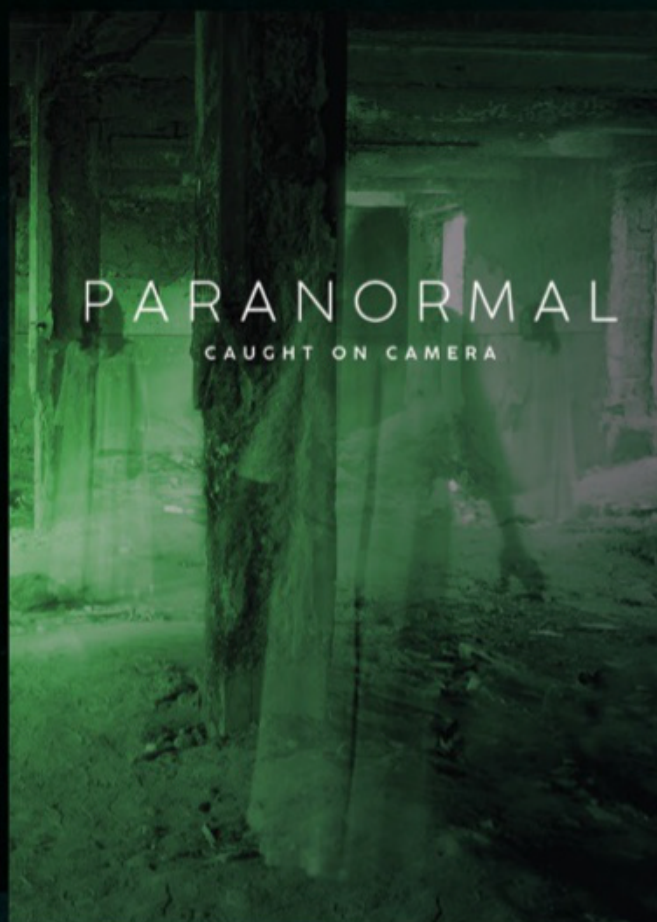


CREEP WEEK

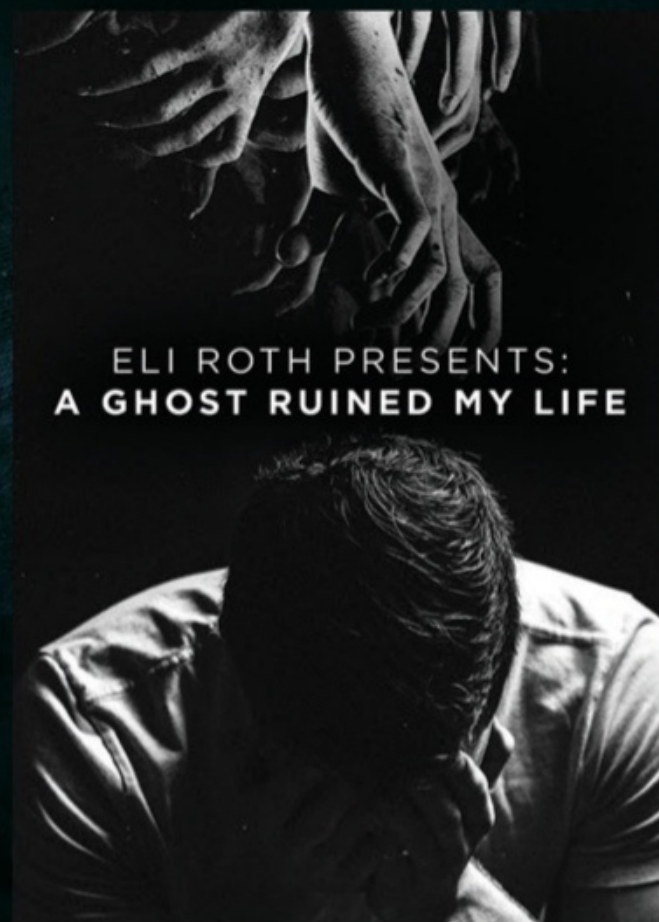
CHANNEL YOUR FEAR
OCTOBER 8-16



SEASON PREMIERE
OCTOBER 12, 10PM ET/PT



SEASON PREMIERE
OCTOBER 13 9PM ET/PT



SEASON PREMIERE
OCTOBER 14 10PM ET/PT

ROGERS TV
267 | 537

ROGERS IGNITE
333

BELL FIBE
1527

BELL SAT
527

EASTLINK
651

SHAW
114

SHAW DIRECT
466

COGECO
167 | 772

FIND YOUR CHANNEL: TANDETV.COM

TETV @TEONTV @TEONTV



We Found Something

FINDERS CREEPERS

WE FOUND SOMETHING

Starring Leslie Gladney, Nathan Owen and Diana Regolizio
Written and directed by Jesse Heisel
Wild Eye Releasing

We Found Something opens with Jeremiah (played by writer/director Jesse Heisel) telling the audience that what they're about to watch is footage he's assembled from a video camera he found. "By no means do I consider myself an editor," he says, and the movie bears out that statement, as there's a surplus of banality on the way to the good stuff.

That camera belongs to Maxie (Leslie Gladney), who took it on a climbing trip in the California mountains with her brother Ted (Nathan Owen), intended to help him get over a past trauma. She also has some bad news



she wants to break to him, the nature of which is telegraphed fairly early on. After much uninspired squabbling, Ted spots a humanoid creature off in the distance and becomes determined to track it down, though only after more bickering and a return home do the siblings set out on that mission. Indeed, *We Found Something* leaves the impression that its story would have been better served as a half-hour anthology entry – especially when a dead body is discovered, and the movie hits the reset button as we watch smartphone video of this victim-to-be (an annoying livestreamer) make her *own* trip into the hills.

There is a final-act twist that puts a nasty little spin on the proceedings, and helps explain an inconsistency or two, though the ending gives us too long a look at the low-budget monster makeup. The leads prove themselves capable of sustaining long, unbroken takes, even when too much of what they perform is unrewarding arguing and

foolish behaviour. A closing text screen informs that *We Found Something* was improvised with no script, and that "the actors had little to no idea what they would be filming each day" – further proof that a little discipline can be a good thing, even in the found-footage genre.

KEN MICHAELS

WILL MURDER FOR METAL

THE RETALIATORS

Starring Michael Lombardi, Marc Menchaca and Joseph Gatt
Directed by Samuel Gonzalez Jr., Michael Lombardi and Bridget Smith
Written by Darren Geare and Jeff Allen Geare
CineLife Entertainment

Coverage of *The Retaliators* could likely fit comfortably in the list feature of this special issue, as it plays out like an overlong heavy metal video. While the revenge yarn has some interesting elements, it lacks the cohesion to make it a fully successful feature.

Small-town pastor Bishop (Lombardi, who also co-directs) is a gentle widower who avoids

GOTHIC HORROR SOUNDTRACKS

IS CELEBRATING

25

Years 1997-2022

JOIN US AT

LEGIONS OF THE NIGHT

➤ EXCLUSIVES • GIVEAWAYS • LIVESTREAMS • MORE ➤

NOW AVAILABLE TO WATCH FOR ON TUBI TV & AMAZON PRIME



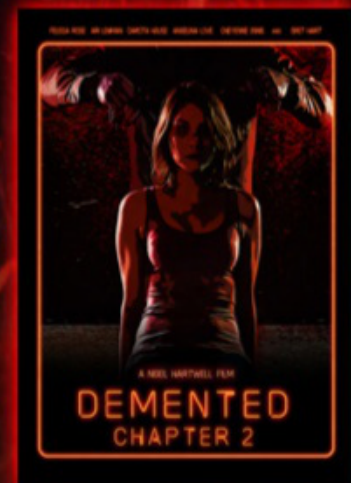
COMING SOON:



October 31 2022

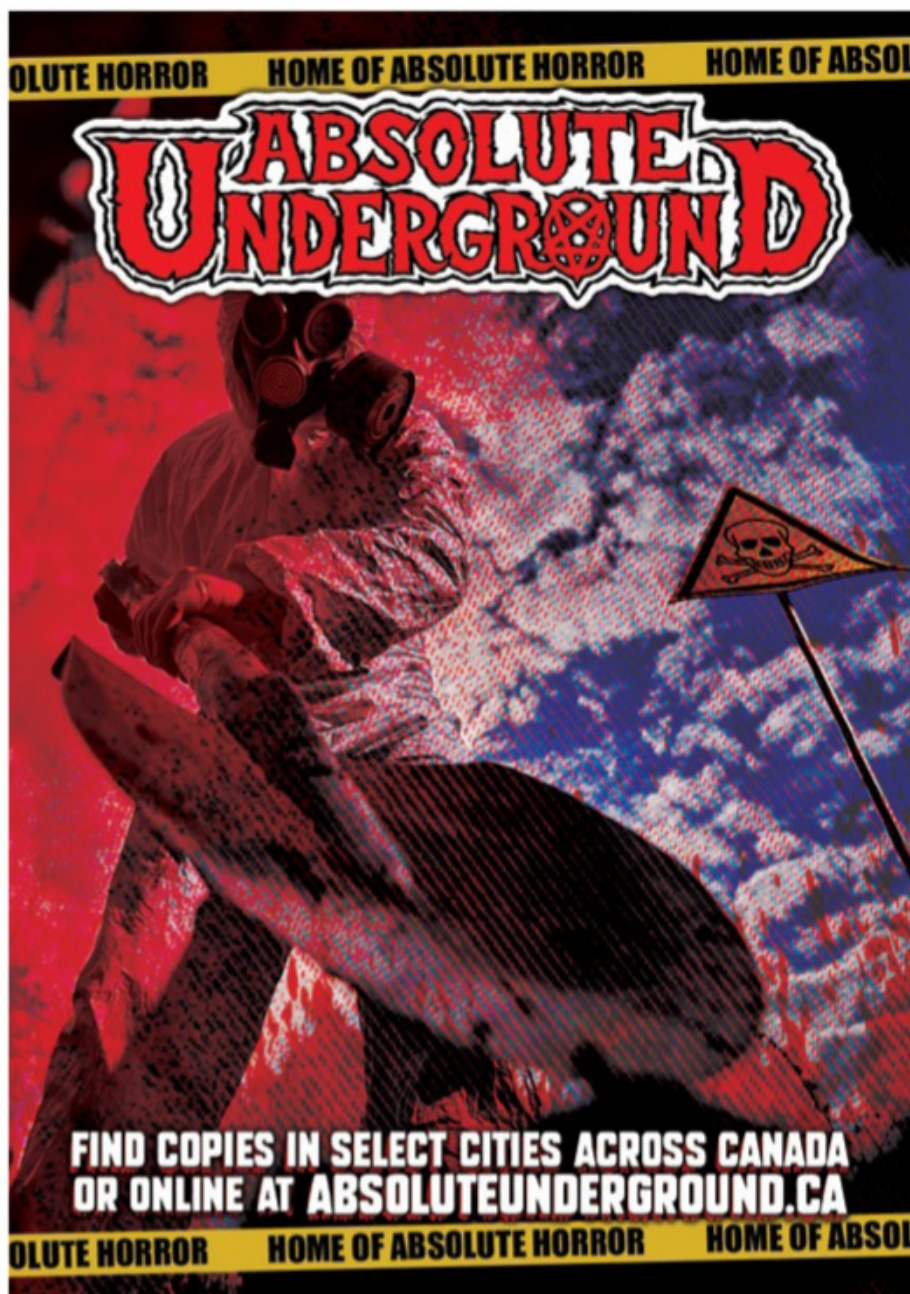


Jan Friday 13th 2023



October 13 2023

DVD Blu-ray prime video a VUDU www.newbloodentertainmentreleasing.com apple tv Google Play vimeo ON DEMAND



TEENAGE FRIENDSHIP SQUARES OFF AGAINST DEMONIC POSSESSION IN *MY BEST FRIEND'S EXORCISM*

HIGH SCHOOL IS HELL

BY MONICA S. KUEBLER

JELLY BRACELETS. TEEN MAGAZINES. CONSOLE TELEVISIONS. BIG HAIR.

While many films seek to capitalize on the current wave of 1980s nostalgia, few pull it off without falling into the traps of pastiche and cliché. *My Best Friend's Exorcism* – adapted from the 2016 novel by Grady Hendrix, with a script by Jenna Lamia, for Amazon Studios – largely avoids these missteps through clever dialogue, nuanced set and wardrobe design, bursts of well-timed comedy, and what can only be described as a deep-seated respect for that much-lampooned decade. In fact, *My Best Friend's Exorcism* (out September 30 on Amazon Prime) almost feels like it could have been made back then.

"I thought it would be great to have a movie that sort of felt like, 'oh, I don't remember *that* movie from the '80s,'" explains director Damon Thomas (TV's *Penny Dreadful*, *Lightfields* miniseries). "I thought that might be quite a nice aesthetic choice to make."

Of course, making that choice feel authentic is another matter altogether, and that's not something that's done alone.

"We had a production designer, [Bruce Curtis], who knew the period and was the right kind of age to have lived through it like me, and who did a very good lookbook of photo references that felt very real," he says. "I think that's the thing about sometimes when people attempt to do period, they go peak period and they push everything to the max, and everyone's wearing legwarmers and everyone's wearing full makeup all the time, and their hair is always perfect, and my big thing in the comments was to go, 'Try and make it real, as much as we can, [as if] they're doing their own makeup,' so that we just gave it that lived-in feel."

Gretchen (Amiah Miller) and Abby (Elsie Fisher) have been BFFs since childhood, but their friendship undergoes some unsettling changes after a girls weekend, during which they experiment with LSD and explore an dilapidated building with a shady past, where they get separated and Gretchen is attacked. Abby thinks her friend's been sexually assaulted and might be suffering from PTSD, but we all know something much more sinister is

at play. Miller does an impressive job of embodying the different stages of her demonic possession, from the initial sickness to inappropriate behaviour and casual cruelty to the seething malevolence we see later when she infects one friend with tapeworms and taunts another after sending her into anaphylactic shock with a tainted pastry.

"We just started a very exhaustive auditioning process where, obviously with it being the pandemic, it was all done in Zoom meetings or tapes, and Amiah – she came in quite late actually, but I was blown away," says Thomas. "I thought her whole audition tape was scary. She'd managed to

do something – it's quite hard for some people to do certain parts of it, and then when they're possessed, they struggle to get there. I thought she was brilliant, so I did some Zoom chemistry reads with three different people and with Elsie, and Amiah and her seemed to work really well, and I thought, 'Great, I've found them.'"

The other key piece, given the film's title, is the exorcism itself. And the one that's performed here is bound to go down as one of the more unusual. Not just for the words that eventually cast the intruder out, but because the film's comic relief, earnest-meathead-for-Jesus

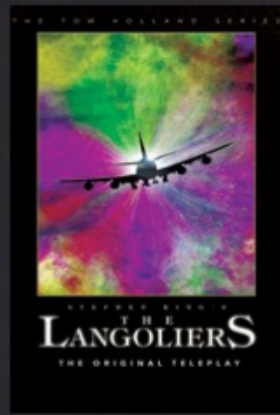
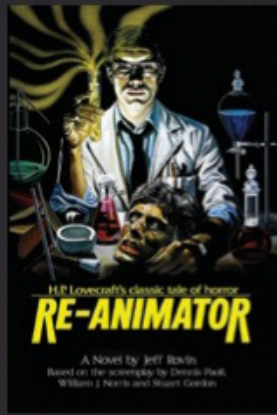
Christian Lemon (Christopher Lowell), is right there beside Abby, bringing a pumped-up freneticism to what is usually a dead serious rite.

"There used to be a group, I think they were called the Power Brothers, but they used to travel around and do that stuff, and I remember seeing their ads on TV when I was a kid," says novelist Hendrix of his inspiration for the character. "[They] would put a block of ice on their chest, or a cinderblock, and break it with a sledgehammer, and I remember how ludicrous that seemed to me, and so I was like, 'of course, people like that would be exorcists.'"

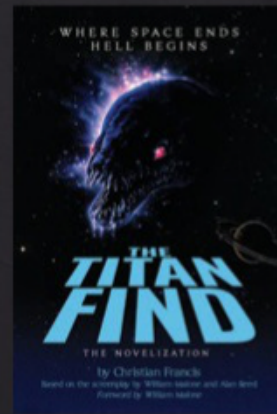
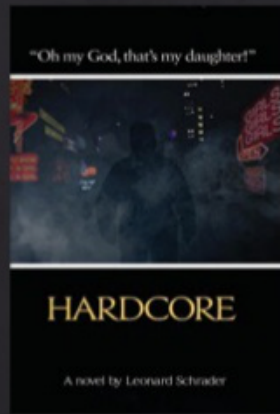
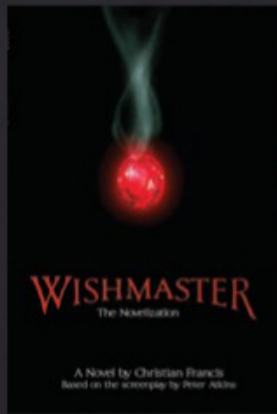
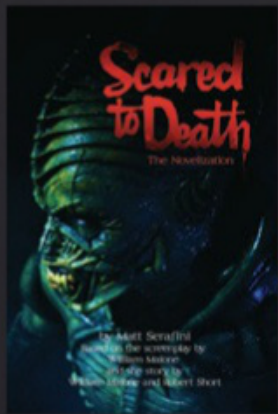
Hendrix's fans are no doubt wondering just how close the film hews to its source material. While it's recognizable, often utilizing dialogue ripped straight from the pages, it's also its own beast.

"There's obviously deviations from the book in terms of tone and what is revealed about the possession aspect of things," says Thomas. "[But] the hope is to do the spirit of the book justice – and the characters within." 🍷





**READ
YOUR
FAVORITE
MOVIES**



ENCYCLOPOCALYPSE
PUBLICATIONS

WWW.ENCYCLOPOCALYPSE.COM · WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD



The Retaliators

conflict until his daughter Sarah (Katie Kelly) is brutally murdered by local mob enforcer Ram (Joseph Gatt) after she inadvertently witnesses him in the process of disposing a body. Bishop becomes obsessed with finding her killer, even as local detective Jed (Marc Menchaca) warns him not to take matters into his own hands. It's a simple plot set along to a prominent soundtrack by artists who also appear in cameos, including Ivan Moody (Five Finger Death Punch), Spencer Charnas (Ice Nine Kills) and Amanda Lyberg (Eva Under Fire).

First-time screenwriters Darren and Jeff Allen Geare have taken a kitchen-sink approach to their movie, throwing in anything that might stick to a simple revenge plot and incorporating everything from gang wars to pseudo-zombies. While the story does a decent job of connecting the dots, *The Retaliators* ultimately suffers from a lack of direction and tone. The bulk of the first two acts seems hell-bent on showing how Hardcore™ it is, festering in the world of drug dealers, rapists, and serial killers. But after what is actually a pretty interesting reveal, the transition from time-honoured revenge plot to attack of the pseudo-zombies doesn't quite work.

Mileage will most certainly vary, but if a movie that features Papa Roach frontman Jacoby Shaddix as a serial killer and Tommy Lee as a strip club DJ (spinning Mötley Crüe songs, natch) is your



jam, then *The Retaliators* offers a few reasons to bang your head (against something hard).

BRYAN CHRISTOPHER

WEREWOLVES OF WWII

BURIAL

Starring Charlotte Vega, Barry Ward, and Tom Felton
Written and directed by Ben Parker
Altitude Film Entertainment

If you've read a synopsis of *Burial* that describes Russian soldiers at the end of World War II fighting German "Werwolfs" over the remains of the führer, and you were hoping for *Dog Soldiers*-meets-*They Saved Hitler's Brain*, I'm sorry to inform you that you're in for a major letdown.

Written and directed by Ben Parker, *Burial* is actually a fairly standard war thriller. What sets it apart is protagonist Brana Vasilyeva (*Wrong Turn*'s Charlotte Vega), the determined, no-nonsense Russian intelligence officer charged with overseeing the mission to get Hitler's corpse out of Germany and back to Russia, to show the world that the German dictator is truly dead. In a forest on the outskirts of Poland, Brana and her men are beset by German *Werwolfs* (not *werewolves*) – soldiers who hide in the woods and employ tactics like smoking out their enemies by burning hallucinogenic plants. Although the Russians are assisted by a resourceful local (Tom Felton, *Harry Potter*'s Draco Malfoy all grown up), they're being whittled down by the Werwolf troops.

There's nothing especially wrong with *Burial*, which is competently made

and well acted (especially by Vega, even if she seems slightly miscast as a tough Russian), but there's also nothing especially right about it. The action set pieces can be slightly confusing (although they're also surprisingly bloody), and they alternate with long, somewhat dull conversations. A wraparound story involving an older Brana adds little to the film except for a slightly macabre twist at the very end.

Burial is one of those movies you watch on your streaming platform when you've seen everything else, and the next day you find yourself trying to remember what you saw the night before.

LISA MORTON



NATURE STALLS

CAMPING TRIP

Starring Leonardo Fuica, Caitlin Cameron and Hannah Forest Briand
Directed by Demian Fuica and Leonardo Fuica
Written by Leonardo Fuica
Fuica Film Pictures/8Cube

I don't know about you, but over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic I have lost all ability to properly gauge the passing of time. Events that seem months away are suddenly happening tomorrow morning; emails I received yesterday and should have responded to have actually been festering in my inbox for weeks. These feelings are only exacerbated by *Camping Trip*, a



STREAMING

OCTOBER 7

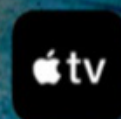
2022

Austin's friends have gone above and beyond to make his Bachelor party one to remember. After the party is interrupted by Austin's ex-girlfriend, who hopes to speak with him before their live paths diverge.

Austin is forced to confront all of his past demons, both unknown and known, and must choose the lesser of two evils in order to survive. With danger lurking around every corner, Austin must use all of his skills and knowledge to make it out alive. Will he be able to survive the PARTY BUS?



STREAM ON



Copyright © 2020 Darrin Ramage All Rights Reserved.
No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.



Camping Trip

crime thriller – ostensibly – that was shot during and heavily references the pandemic. The runtime is given as an hour and forty-five minutes, but this *Camping Trip* feels like a lifetime.

At the end of the first lockdown, two couples head out to an isolated camping spot on a lake. However, this foursome isn't alone in the woods: a nervous doctor shows up to make a money-for-"merchandise" exchange with a pair of shady dumdums, but before the deal can go down, the doctor hides his bag of money in one couple's tent. The doctor gets dead, the dumdums want their dough and, before the night is over, the foursome goes full *Lord of the Flies* because, according to this film, the pandy makes you see "the real, true nature of people."

Camping Trip is twenty minutes of plot stretched beyond the limits of rationality thanks



to the far-too-ample use of a drone, whether it's sweeping over the idyllic landscape yet again or spinning in a nausea-inducing circle. It's obvious that the Fuica brothers wanted their film to have style, and for that style to impart big meaning and feelings, such as a scene of sexual assault and violence that plays out in slow motion for ten minutes. By the time the credits rolled on this thrill-less

thriller, the only thing I felt was numb.

STACIE PONDER

A PLAGUE IN THE BRAIN

THE HARBINGER

Starring Gabby Beans, Emily Davis and Myles Walker
Written and directed by Andy Mitton
XYZ Films

It wasn't long into the pandemic that speculation began about how the horror genre would address and adapt to this real-life trauma, and Andy Mitton's *The Harbinger* represents a best-case scenario. With a keen sense for details of behavior and circumstance during the worst of the lockdown period, he has also developed a mythology for the titular supernatural being that ties into and reflects its concerns, with chilling results.

Queens, NY resident Mavis (Emily Davis) is having an even worse time sheltering in place than most people, as intense nightmares about the Harbinger are leading her to acts of self-mutilation. She calls for help from old friend Monique (Gabby Beans), who takes the risk of leaving the upstate New York home where she's been holing up with her brother Lyle (Myles Walker) and father Ronald (Ray Anthony Thomas) – against their understandable objections. Upon



arriving at Mavis' place, Monique learns that she's in danger of catching more than COVID: the Harbinger threatens to invade her psyche as well, giving Monique a personal stake in helping Mavis escape its psychological grasp.

For the past decade or so, Mitton has been building an impressive résumé of character-based fright features (*Yellowbrickroad* and *We Go On*, directed with Jesse Holland, and *The Witch in the Window*). *The Harbinger* is his strongest achievement yet, tapping into the emotions we all felt during that pre-vaccination period of life-or-death precautions and uncertainty, without gratuitously exploiting those anxieties. The ways in which the leads deal with both the re-

alities of the pandemic and the unearthly creature plaguing their dreams are authentic and affecting throughout, and the more we learn about the Harbinger's end-game and what it puts at stake, the more we yearn for Monique and Mavis to defeat it. Mitton leavens the situation while upping the authenticity with a couple of briefly seen supporting characters: Mavis' maskless, irritable neighbour (Stephanie Roth Haber-

le), and the demonologist (Laura Heisler) who is inevitably consulted on-line—and, like so many other academics during lockdown, is stuck at home with her kids.

MICHAEL GINGOLD

HALLOWEEN • HORROR
MONSTERS • TOYS
NOSTALGIA TRIPS

CREEPY CO.

WWW.CREEPYCOMPANY.COM

COMIX • COLLECTING
SECRET HANDSHAKES
CARTOONS • CULT FILMS



SHOP OUR HUGE SELECTION OF GOURMET HORROR COFFEE IN-STORE OR ON-LINE
DEADLYGROUNDS.CA • USE CODE RUE15 FOR 15% OFF!

IT'S WORTH THE VISIT TO COURTYCE

DEADLY GROUND'S

COFFEE TO DIE FOR

CAFE

HANG OUT IN THE DEADLY GROUND'S

EXPERIENCE THE SUPERZOOKA SHOP-IN-SHOP
 SUPERZOOKA.COM

SUPER ZOOKA
 SUPER SHOCK SHOP

DON'T MISS THE SECRET ROOM!

REISSUED & REANIMATED

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD



KIER-LA JANISSE'S HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN BOXED SET

In 2012, Kier-La Janisse set a new standard for genre analysis with *House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films*, tying in her observations on the subject with a revealing memoir of her own troubled history. This year sees not only FAB Press' expanded 10th-anniversary edition of the book (see review on p.72), but Severin Films' boxed set *House of Psychotic Women: Rarities Collection*, giving American Blu-ray debuts to four features covered in its pages. Released through Severin's website on August 30, the set goes into wider distribution October 25.

Rarities Collection assembles newly restored transfers of Giuseppe Patroni Griffi's Elizabeth Taylor-starring psychodrama *Identikit* (a.k.a. *The Driver's Seat*), Grzegorz Warchol's extremely offbeat vampire film *I Like Bats*, Luigi Bazzoni's giallo *Footprints*, and *The Other Side of the Underneath*, the screen adaptation by multimedia artist Jane Arden of her stage production *A New Communion for Freaks, Prophets, and Witches*. Speaking to *Rue Morgue* at the Fantasia International Film Festival, where she world-premiered the restorations of *Footprints*, *I Like Bats*, and *Identikit* (and also screened *Il demonio*, from her massive and celebrated *All the*

Haunts Be Ours: A Compendium of Folk Horror), Janisse reveals that creating the Blu-ray package was a last-minute decision.

"The new book had already gone to the printer, so this was around May," she recalls. "I said



to David [Gregory, president of Severin Films], 'You know, we should try to get some of the rarer movies that have never been released, and create a little boxed set.' David was like,

'There's no time to do that' – you know, the time it takes to source the rights and pay for them, write up the contracts, get the materials and do the restorations. But it seemed like too good an idea to pass up and he was willing to try, so I gave him a list of films that excited me that either had never been released in North America or hadn't come out on Blu-ray.

"I tried to make it a bit of a roller-coaster ride," she adds, "and curated them to be watched in a particular order, so you would have your emotions moving in a certain way. They're all very different, and *I Like Bats* is definitely the wild card, because it's a very silly movie. Normally I don't go for super-silly stuff, but it has this Eastern European type of absurd humour that I responded to, and I felt like the box needed a bit of levity. Some of the movies, like *The Other Side of the Underneath*, are pretty heavy."

Janisse discovered these movies over the years in varying ways – first learning of *The Other Side* via an attention-grabbing ad in *Films and Filming* magazine, for example. As can often happen, she came across *I Like Bats* while going down a strange internet rabbit hole.

"I was doing a Google image search for some totally different movie, and the poster for *I Like Bats* came up, which was this very striking teal-and-orange half-toned design," she says. "It was the Czech poster, even though the film is Polish, and I was like, 'What's that!?' So I clicked on it, and then I just became desperate to find

the movie. I didn't know what it was about or anything, but I loved the poster and wanted to see it."

When it came to securing the movies and getting them restored, *The Other Side of the Underneath* was fairly straightforward because the BFI had actually restored it several years back, so Janisse was able to secure much of their materials.

"Everything else we had to scan from scratch, and it was pretty hairy for the timeline," she says, "but we have a great post supervisor at Severin named Andrew Furtado, who takes delivery on all the files and QC's everything and makes sure the sound is right; he's like a wizard. So it was Andrew focusing on the actual materials, David focusing on the contracts, and me focusing on special features, trying to get everything to come together in time."

Even with the limited schedule, Janisse was able to pull together a solid roster of bonus material, including audio commentaries by assorted film historians, a video essay on *Footprints* about ubiquitous Italian-horror child actress Nicoletta Elmi, and an interview with legendary cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, who shot both *Footprints* and *Identikit*. There were, inevitably, the ones who got away...

"Unfortunately, for *I Like Bats* I tried so hard to contact the main actress [Katarzyna Walter], reaching out through her agent, her Facebook, her everything, writing in Polish, and we couldn't get a response," she explains. "We tried to get as much stuff in there as we could, but we had such a short time to do the special features that we had to stick to things we knew we could get. If we'd had more time, we probably could have summoned some more people to be involved. Like Florinda Bolkan; I would have loved to have had time to chase her down. But we did what we could in the short turnaround time."

In the course of assembling *Rarities Collection*, Janisse and company went searching for other never-before-released-on-disc films and only found proper elements after the deadline for the boxed set had passed. Those may turn up in a follow-up collection, though she advises that there are no specific plans at the moment.

"You can't map out multiple sets of things when you don't know how the first one's going to do," she says. "We viewed *House of Psychotic Women* as a stand-alone project, and then if it does well, we can look into doing something more. There also might be opportunities to collaborate with other companies on releasing some of the other movies. And if the branding of the book helps get attention for some of the smaller films, that's great. When you can tie a group of movies in under a certain umbrella, and that umbrella is something people know or trust or like, it can benefit those smaller titles. So that's the goal."



Identikit



I Like Bats



The Other Side of the Underneath



Footprints



CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Ticks Are For Kids

by John W. Bowen

If you're a regular reader of Bowen's Basement (or even if you just suffer from occasional irregularity), you'll have doubtless deduced that 99.999999 percent of the largely overlooked films I feature here are selected for one of two reasons: they're either a) good, or more frequently, b) so entertainingly bad they're good. A very small number fall outside those parameters but only on the rarest of occasions does a film fall evenly into *both* categories. *Ticks* (1993), Wretched Reader, is one such rarity.

If backwoods mutant bug movies tighten your tighty whiteys, this one has *everything*: mutant bugs, really disgusting mutant bug egg sacks, the ever-popular isolated domicile under siege, Roger Corman-worthy junk science, a forest fire, surprisingly good animatronic creature effects, lotsa spurty gore, a bombastic-ass orchestral (!!!) music score, good guys and bad guys forced to unite (sort of) against a common enemy, a barely recognizable *teenage* Seth Green (as opposed to all those teenagers he played between his twenties and forties), that dorky guy from *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* (no, he doesn't dance) playing a tough delinquent really unconvincingly, and *Clint fucking Howard* as even Dave Alexander has never seen him before. (Disclosure: I watched this movie with the aforementioned Dave, our Special Projects Manager, former Editor-in-Chief, and full-time Clint Howard aficionado, who sent several heaping plates of Thai food airborne in an undignified, overgrown-kid-at-Christmas fanboy frenzy.) It's also got some choice non-sequiturs ("My panic disorder's acting up and I gotta get out of this room," Green's character whinges when the place is on fire and under attack by overgrown creepy-crawlies) and even a few good burns ("Did you ever kill anybody?" "I've killed about as many dudes as you've boned chicks.")

The set-up for any backwoods horror film tends to be as simple as it is absolutely crucial:



find a reason to send a group of protagonists (the less nature-savvy the better) out to some remote location and leave them there, so that they may find themselves at the mercy of the baddies du jour (inbred hillbillies, monsters, aliens, supernatural entities, serial killers, or... ticks, I guess) as well as the unfamiliar, unforgiving landscape itself. Most of *Ticks*' victim pool consists of a van full of troubled and/or troublesome teens (with predictably flimsy back stories) who have been compelled by their parents, the juvenile justice system, or some combo thereof to attend a deep-woods camp/encounter group/retreat thingy to um, heal up or straighten up or sober up or smarten up or one of those things your elders are always after you to do, presided over by the usual Well-Meaning But Largely Ineffectual Grown-ups (Rosalind Allen and the late Peter Scolari).

Next up is the inevitable "but little do they know" factor, which in this case involves a nearby marijuana grow op that's guarded by booby-trap-fancying psychos who've been treating the crop with steroids that permeate the local ecosystem and cause the local ticks therein to

grow to the size of tarantulas (and then to the size of bigger tarantulas and eventually much, much bigger tarantulas) and run amok.

Stock characters and by-the-numbers premise aside, director Tony Randel (*Hellbound: Hellraiser II*) brings tremendous energy to the proceedings, particularly in the second half, but never at the expense of coherence — no mean feat during a final act involving a house under siege by giant mutant bugs during a forest fire. (I suspect Randel's extensive resume as an editor has something to do with this.) The film's vintage alone explains its ambience: still close enough to the late '80s to seethe with that groan-inducing spray-cheese vibe but with just enough distance to openly self-satirize, *Ticks*, being pre-*Scream*, never turns irony into job one. Picture

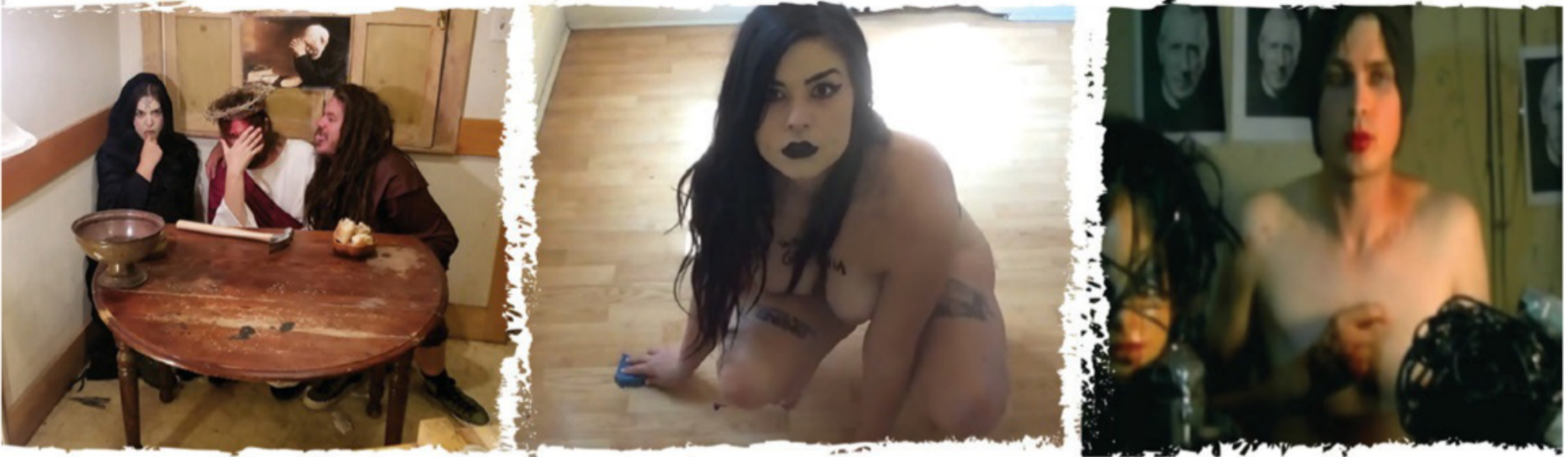
a lower-rent *Tremors* with near-*Evil Dead*-level rambunctiousness and you're in the ballpark, but only just, so seek out this scrappy little hot mess and strap yourself in, m'kay? Now get the hell out of my basement as soon as you finish scraping Dave's vegetable Pad Thai off the ceiling. Put your back into it, for fucksakes! 🍷



White Gardenia



How to Raise Women from the Dead



- i. The Secret Perfume of Decay
- ii. m.i.p.a.m.h.
- iii. Civilization Level Quantum Suicide
- iv. How to Make a Homemade Porno
- v. Housewife Masturbating to Daytime Television 1973
- vi. Mobius Strip
- vii. Why the Human Race Needs to Get Used to Pain
- viii. White Gardenia Interview w/ James S. Gates
- ix. Resurrector
- x. Video for Teilhard de Chardin
- xi. How to Live Forever and Raise All of Your Loved Ones From the Dead

Eleven Extreme Films on TWO Discs
(Contains Graphic/ Adult Content 18+)



available to order @
abaroquehouse.com
paypal accepted



FILES FROM THE BLACK MUSEUM

THE LONG SHADOWS OF CLASSIC HORROR'S PAST

BY PAUL CORUPE

Who's Afraid of the Big Black Bat

"SUPERHEROES ARE OFTEN DEPICTED AS FRIENDLY GUARDIANS OF HUMANKIND, BUT EVEN JUST THE IDEA THAT SUPERHEROES EXIST SHOULD MAKE US A LITTLE NERVOUS."

Though they still fly high at the box office, superhero films seem to be finally wearing out their critical welcome, thanks to a flooded market and a reliance on formulaic storytelling. To keep things fresh, Marvel Studios has increasingly incorporated other genres into their sci-fi action flicks – from comedy to martial arts – but many were still taken aback by the macabre atmosphere and jump scares in last spring's Sam Raimi-helmed hit *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022). Even though horror films and superhero epics don't cross paths too often these days, you may be surprised that the two genres have an intertwined DNA that goes all the way back to the silent movie era. Recently swooping in on Blu-ray from Film Detective, *The Bat* (1959) provides a nostalgic glimpse of that oft-forgotten connection; an undeniably spooky remake of an earlier old dark house thriller that is acknowledged as a major influence on the development of one of cinema's biggest comic book successes.

There's no caped crusader battling crime in *The Bat*, but there is a mysterious masked figure searching for a stash of stolen loot. The film stars Agnes Moorehead as mystery novelist Cornelia van Gorder, who rents a spooky old manor for a writer's retreat to complete her latest book. Unbeknownst to her, the estate's shady owner John Fleming (Harvey Stephens) is busy across town trying to convince his friend Dr. Wells (Vincent Price) to help cash in a hidden bundle of securities he embezzled. Wells initially refuses, but once he's forced to shoot Fleming in self-defence, he heads back to the house to get his hands on the pilfered profits. But Wells isn't the only greedy party – Cornelia and her maid (Lenita Lane) are frightened by rumours that the Bat, an anonymous killer, is lurking in the neighbourhood. Hearing strange noises one night, they discover that an intruder has slipped into the house undetected.

A late entry in the old dark house cycle, *The Bat* and its titular menace are almost proudly archaic. From his first appearance in Mary Roberts Rinehart's 1908 novel *The Circular Staircase*, the Bat soon appeared on screen in the 1927 silent adaptation *The Bat*, and a later sound remake, *The Bat Whispers* (1930). The success of these films went beyond just the



box office – as the co-creator of Batman, comic artist Bob Kane frequently acknowledged how he was influenced by the morally ambiguous Bat, who exposes bank robbers even as he attempts to make off with their ill-gotten gains, baffling police in the process. Seen today, these early films reveal some amazing similarities between the characters – the 1927 version of the Bat actually wears a pointy-eared hood and, at one point, shines a bat signal on the wall. But perhaps most notable is the way that both films show how the Bat scares and intimidates others to impose his will. As an anonymous, unknowable figure with an imposing dark costume – sometimes seen only in shadow – the Bat's mere presence implies the threat of violence.

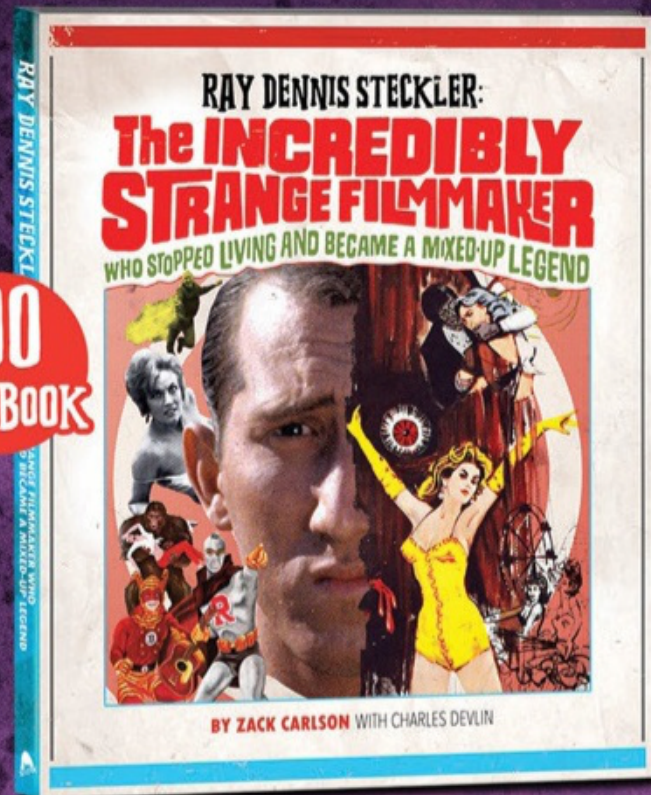
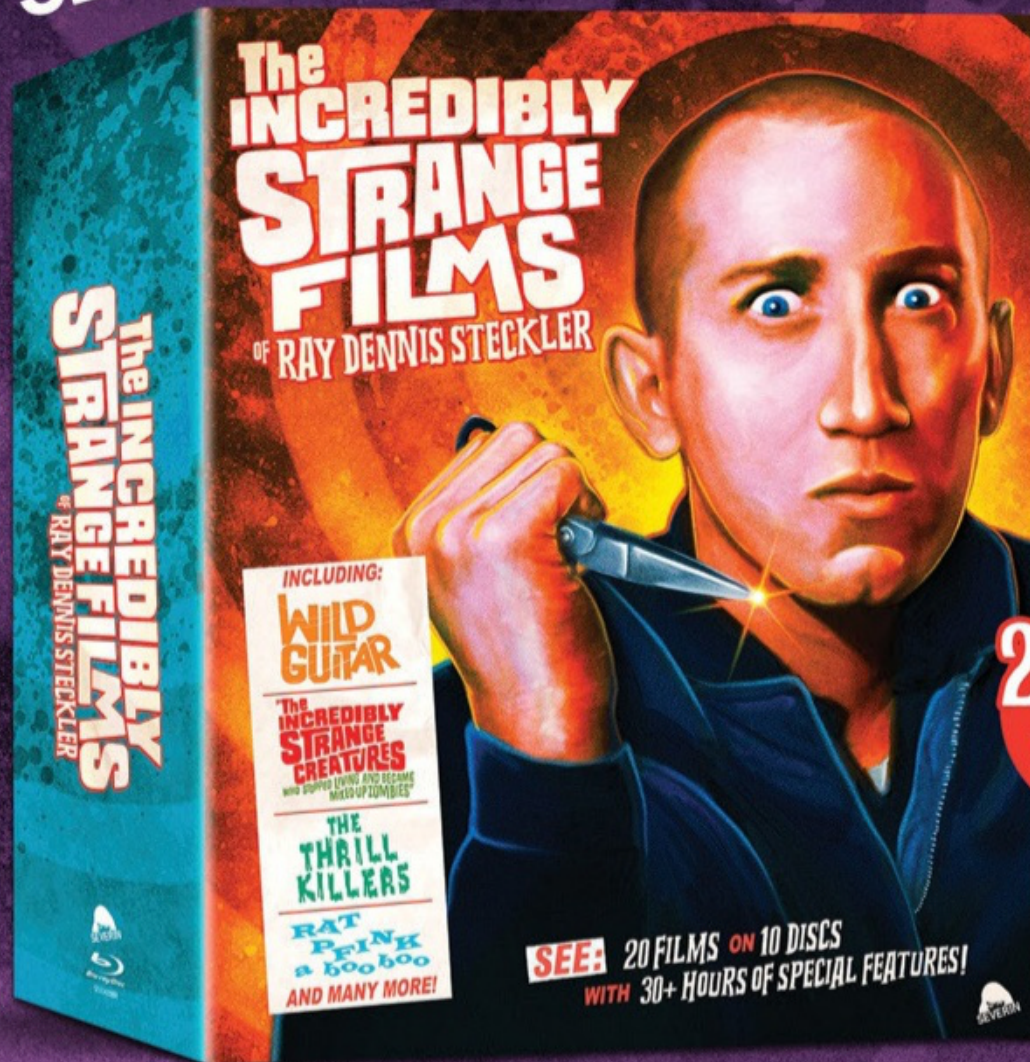
Released two decades after Batman first hit comic book pages, the 1959 remake of *The Bat* again features the menacing protagonist of the earlier films, only far more deadly. Trading the goofy bat ears for a fedora and dark face-covering stocking, this Bat is surprisingly modern, prefiguring the stylish unknown *giallo* killers of Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace* (1964) and *So Sweet, So Dead* (1972). And this Bat no longer just threatens to kill – his black leather gloves are tipped with razor-sharp knives that he uses to slice the throats of his victims. It's the Dark Knight as he might exist in an alternate reality where, instead of renouncing his horror roots to fight crime, he firmly embraced his destiny as the Freddy Krueger of the '50s.

Superheroes are often depicted as friendly guardians of humankind, quick with a quip and a smile, but even just the idea that superheroes exist should make us a little nervous. Of course, there have been horror-indebted characters in films over the years, such as *The Crow* (1994), *Blade* (1998), and even *Morbius* (2022), but it's actually terrifying to think that we could exist alongside any such powerful beings – some not even human – which could choose to destroy us if they simply felt like it. While mostly forgotten in the colourful spectacle of today's superhero movies, this distressing ambiguity is what makes *The Bat* and other haunted house B-thrillers so effective, even to modern viewers. Sure, they say they want to uphold truth and justice, but you don't have to be a cigar-chomping newspaper publisher to know that every hero is really just a menace in disguise. 🦇

SEVERIN

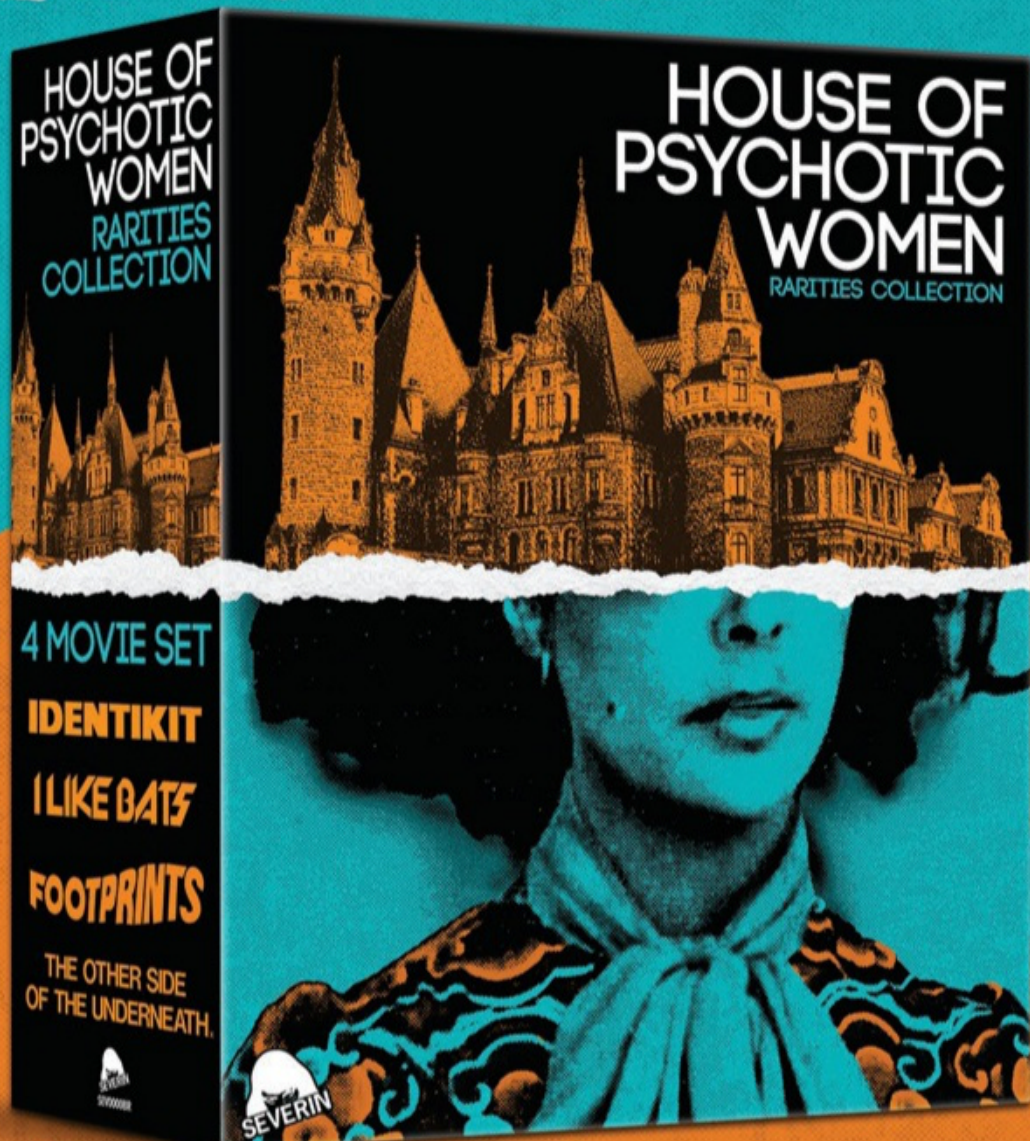
"A LOW-BUDGET AUTEUR WHOSE SURREALISTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE PLOTS WENT BEYOND ZOMBIES TO DISPLAY SUPERHEROES, ROCKERS, BIKINI-CLAD BEACH GIRLS AND FLOURISHES OF WHAT SOME SAW AS INSPIRED MOVIE MAKING."

The New York Times



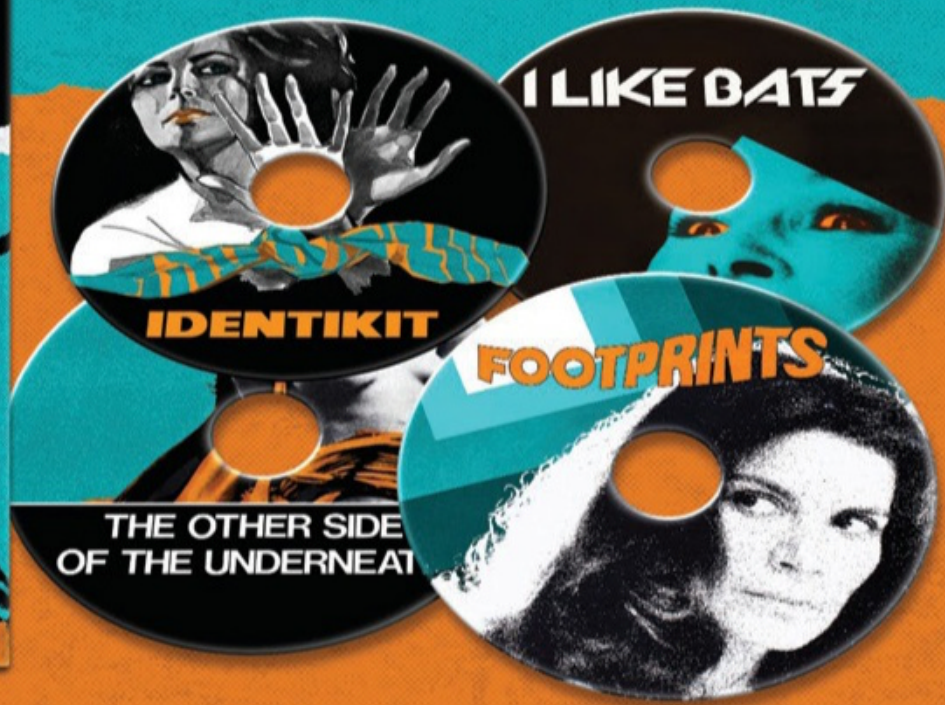
**100
PAGE BOOK**

**20 FILMS
ON 10 DISCS**



"GROUNDBREAKING..."
HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN IS ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PIECES OF FILM ANALYSIS OF THE 21ST CENTURY. KIER-LA JANISSE IS A LEGEND IN THE GENRE COMMUNITY."

Screen Anarchy



@SeverinFilms



@SeverinFilms

SeverinFilms.com



/SeverinFilms



/SeverinFilmsOfficial

IN THIS
ISSUE

**THE VERY FINAL
LAST GIRLS**

Josh Eiserike, Z. Crockett
and Andres Barrero
Darby Pop

**THE BRITISH PARANORMAL
SOCIETY: TIME OUT OF MIND #1**

Chris Roberson and Andrea Mutti
Dark Horse

COLD IRON #1

Andy Diggle and Nick
Brokenshire
Comixology Originals/
Final Form

**OLD BAG OF
TRICKS**

Kevin J. Cyr
Tellwell Talent

THE PANIC

Neil Kleid
and Andrea Mutti
Comixology Originals/
Dark Horse

**DALF-LO: A CEREAL
WORTH KILLING FOR!**

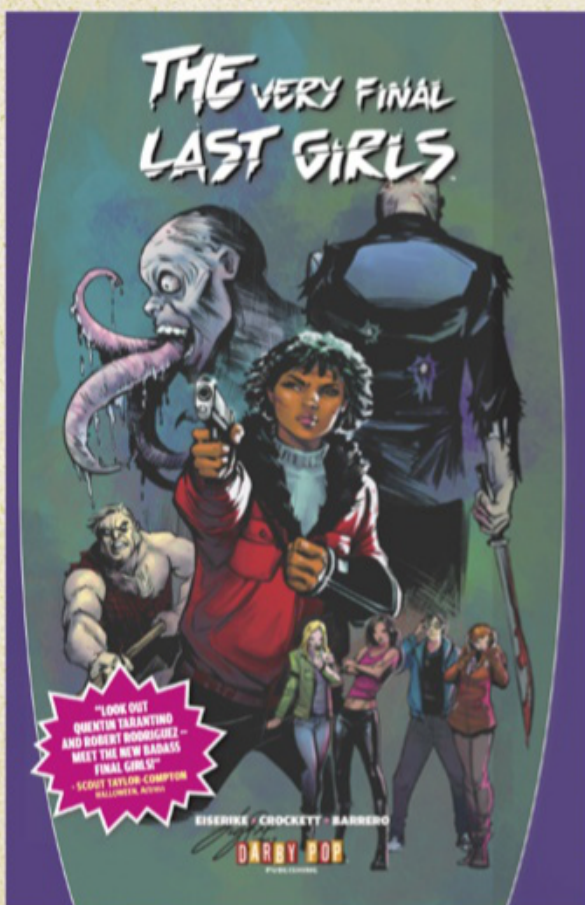
Luanga Nuwame
and Christina Deljanov
Zelpha Comics

BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

BY PEDRO CABEZUELO

As the horror genre continues to deconstruct itself, one of the more intriguing ideas to emerge over the last few years is the examination of post-traumatic stress disorder among survivors of ordeals. While earlier explorations, such as in the *Scream* franchise, took a tongue-in-cheek approach to the topic, more recent fare, such as the *Halloween* reboot, has taken a far more serious and introspective perspective. But it was another movie altogether, the 2011 meta-horror-comedy *The Cabin in the Woods*, that inspired writer Josh Eiserike to plunge headfirst into the genre to create his new graphic novel, *The Very Final Last Girls*.

"I leapt down the rabbit hole, falling in love with the genre's classics, deep cuts, and cult favourites... and I kept coming back to the final girl trope that *Cabin* so brilliantly dissects," says Eiserike. "I found myself wondering what would happen to the women after the credits roll? Would the government have some sort of rehabilitation program for teenage survivors? And what if something – or someone – began murdering the final girls, one by one?"



And so, enter Megan Williams, a teenager who has recently lived through a zombie attack that killed her friends and most of her family, and now finds herself an unwilling resident at a secret facility housing a PTSD rehab program for girls (and one boy) who have survived what the doctors call "metaphysical phenomena." There, she meets others who lived to tell tales of summer camp slashers, pod people invasions, cult serial killers, and psychic attacks. But Megan doesn't care to make friends; she'd rather find out where the government stashed her kid sister and, even more urgently, who's suddenly murdering her fellow patients in grisly fashion.

Eiserike may be relatively new to horror but he has wholeheartedly embraced the genre and *TVFLG* is full of sly nods to past classics, both narratively and visually (beautifully rendered by artists Z. Crockett and Andres Barrero). It's a mishmash of the supernatural, aliens, werewolves, witches, and psychopaths. Yet, rather than spiralling out of control, this panic-inducing potpourri is contained snugly by the final girl trope and the novel premise of uniting fellow survivors and pitting them against a new, unknown adversary.

"I think the concept of a 'last' or 'final' girl has resulted in some of horror's most compelling characters – would-be victims who ultimately prove to be the equals of their monsters," explains Eiserike. "The final girls are the ultimate underdogs. The stakes in horror stories are so high, so visceral... and the final girls are so unlikely. The demons might sell the merchandise, but our emotional connection is with the people."

To underline that emotional connection, Eiserike knows when to put the jokes away and get serious. Megan's journey is full of pain and suffering, and the writing works hard not to short-change her experiences. In addition to giv-



The Very Final Last Girls: A nod at the meta-horror of *Scream* and *The Cabin in the Woods*, where final girls recover from their ordeals.

ing greater depth to a character, the exploration of PTSD among survivors can bring other advantages to the grim narrative.

"I think it flips the script a bit," says Eiserike. "The 2020 *Invisible Man* did this beautifully, not only modernizing the H.G. Wells original, but also shifting perspective in a way that felt fresh and exciting. There's something really fun about investing in a character who knows the stakes – and maybe even the rules – because they've been through this ordeal before; just like the audience. Of course, other characters might not believe the warnings... and those unfortunates will have to learn the hard way." 🧡

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCABEZUELO

QUICK CUTS

The Hellboy universe expands yet again with *The British Paranormal Society: Time Out of Mind*. Introduced as supporting characters in *Witchfinder*, BPS members Simon Bruttenholm and Honora Grant take centre stage as they travel to the remote English village of Noxton in April 1910. While Simon searches for a missing colleague, Honora explores the town's strange spring traditions. Anyone who's seen or read any tales set in out-of-the-way British villages can guess where this is headed and sure enough, the duo is soon hearing about local folk legends from secretive residents and wandering around graveyards and stone circles. It's certainly not breaking any new ground, but *Hellboy* has often been about dropping its unique cast of characters into familiar tropes and myths. Simon and Honora are worthy additions to the canon and while it's still early, this universe has generated enough goodwill over the years to warrant further reading.



From the English countryside we travel some 100-plus years to the Isle of Man, ensconced in the Irish Sea, for *Cold Iron*. This area is steeped in Celtic tradition and never more so than on Halloween eve; or as the locals call it, Hop-tu-Naa. Among them is aspiring singer/songwriter Kay Farragher who stumbles upon Mona that night, a strange and seemingly traumatized young girl wandering the back roads. Confused by



Kay's car and paved roads, Mona insists that she is being chased by a monstrous creature, the legendary Glashtyn. Drawing from his childhood visits to the Isle of Man, author Andy Diggle creates a grounded, realistic setting anchored by Kay and her superstitious grandmother, before diving into the deep waters of Celtic and faerie lore. As a result, this feels like a genuine and distinctive locale, as opposed to yet another generic, British rural environment.

Halloween is also at the forefront of *Old Bag of Tricks* – only in this case, the villainy is far from supernatural. Old Evelyn Smith remains traumatized by her brutal gang rape decades earlier, and her thirst for vengeance has led to her poisoning, torturing, and murdering innocent trick-or-treaters every year. Enter Thomas and his two

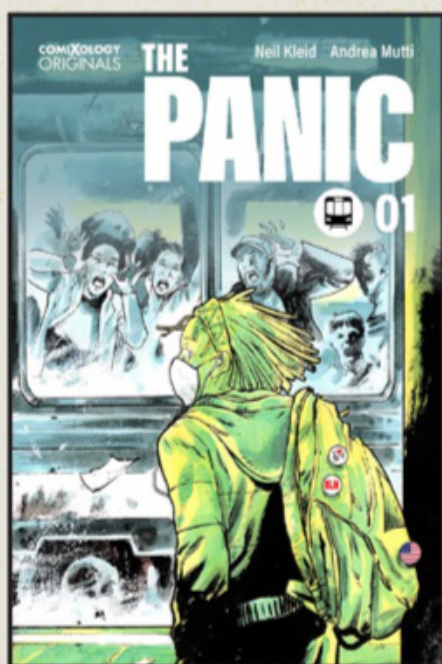
friends, out for one last Halloween fling before they enter adolescence. But the three boys are in for one nasty treat when they go knocking on Evy's door. In the Grand Guignol tradition, *Tricks* is painted bloody with thin characters to keep the gore flowing. Thomas and his friends are indistinguishable from each other and Evy, despite her tragic past, is a caricature of the suspicious candy-givers your parents warned you about. The author clearly aims to shock and disturb, and while his visceral enthusiasm is infectious, his use of black comedy and satire is occasionally tasteless, making for a somewhat schizophrenic read.



to side with. And perhaps that is the story's key takeaway – despite social media's attempts to paint divisive issues as black or white, there's more than one side to every story. And though crushed bodies and corpses being feasted upon by rodents is the stuff of nightmares, the bleakest aspect of *The Panic* is the characters' inability to put their differences aside in order to survive.

Dalf-Lo is more than just a faerie-like mascot

for the world's most popular sugar-coated cereal, Sweet Vitamin Puffs of Fun. He's an other-dimensional creature that lures children into his magical world of Breakfast Bliss for his own nefarious purposes through a portal of milk, sugar and marshmallows, and may Lucky the Leprechaun protect any parents who stand in his way. A quirky and bloody love letter to breakfast cereals of yore, *Dalf-Lo: A Cereal Worth Killing For* is both comic and storybook, with alternating pages providing prose insight into the killer sprite's warped thoughts and motivation. It's an interesting experiment that mostly succeeds, though author Luanga Nuwame's text is sometimes repetitive and too often describes what's happening in the accompanying illustrations instead of allowing artist Christina Deljanov's excellent art to speak for itself. 🍩



Dreamscape FX is giving gore away! Win your very own movie-grade silicone eye

Dreamscape FX



<http://DreamscapeFX.studio>

To enter the giveaway:
Follow @DreamscapeFX on Instagram and
post a clear picture of our name + logo from this ad.
Tag us in the post. Open to US and Canada only.



HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN: EXPANDED EDITION

Keir-La Janisse
FAB Press

Upon its initial release in 2012, *House of Psychotic Women* revolutionized horror and cult film scholarship. Author Kier-La Janisse's gonzo feminist approach to the study of the genre quickly earned its first edition a place alongside such essential volumes as David J. Skal's *The Monster Show*, Carol J. Clover's *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, and editor Barry Keith Grant's *The Dread of Difference*. Stylistically, Janisse's

writing blends the insight of the late Robin Wood with the incisiveness of Laura Mulvey, but any comparison to other greats in the decidedly small world of serious academic genre criticism ultimately falls short. Blurring the line between autobiography and

film studies, just as her subject matter blurs the lines of art and exploitation, Janisse's writing is incomparable.

Subtitled "An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films," *House of Psychotic Women* (now expanded with over 100 new film reviews) lays bare Janisse's lifelong and at times contentious relationship with horror's persistent archetype of the "neurotic woman" and its evolution and adaptability as a genre trope. With such chapter headings as "Broken Dolls," "After School Special," and "Heal Me With Hatred," the book covers the breadth and depth of the depiction of women and mental illness (real or perceived) from the sublimely paranoid *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* to the gruesomely explicit *Nekromantik*.

Janisse's approach to the material is personal, at times uncomfortably so. In the preface to this new expanded edition, she offhandedly mentions being escorted from her hotel room by the police for "a brief, involuntary stopover in a psych ward" during the Fantasia Film Festival. In what could be a plot to a psychological horror film, she goes on to describe how the publication of *House of Psychotic*

Women has, in her words, made her "vulnerable to people who've wielded its toolkit" against her. Yet, Janisse's vulnerability and unflinching candidness are among the book's greatest strengths. Relatable but never self-indulgent, *House of Psychotic Women* is a must-read for those seeking serious insight into horror's ongoing struggles with gender and the depiction of women.

WILLIAM WRIGHT

LIES OF TENDERNESS

Stephen Volk
PS Publishing

Stephen Volk's new collection is a 470-page beast, containing a rich variety of offerings: dark fantasy (an invisible giant's point of view in "Agog"), macabre psychology ("The Holocaust Crasher" enters the mind of a man who publicly pretends to be a concentration camp survivor), and modern weird (the ambiguous "The Flickering Light"). There are also a couple of riffs on horror classics: "The Black Cat" purports to tell the true account of Poe's evergreen story (it was not a cat: it was a baby!), while "Sicko" offers an alternative take on Hitchcock's *Psycho* where Marion survives the night in the Bates Motel, only to return to the real villain of that story. Many will like the multiple-awards nominee "Vardøger," but the novella about a man chasing his doppelgänger in a hotel over-stays its welcome.

Standout horror pieces include "The House That Moved Next Door," a fine tribute to Robert Aickman that offers an ambiguous take on a weird childhood memory and its apparent incompatibility with present reality; and "Unchain the Beast," reminiscent of Kim Newman's playful re-imaginings of horror cinema history, here: Mexican monster movies of the 1960s and their connections with the oppressive political regime. What "Outside of Truth or Consequences" may lack in terms of subtext and lofty ambitions, it gains as a pure fun, pulpy suspense about an escaped convict who ends up in a reclusive mad scientist's desert joint. And finally, "The Naughty Step" can be seen as a free

variation of "The Turn of the Screw," with a female social worker trying to gain the confidence of a child in stupor at a domestic crime scene.

Stephen Volk's stories are mostly slow burners that demand readers' patience and investment but, more often than not, they pay in worthwhile dividends.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

HORROR FILM AND OTHERNESS

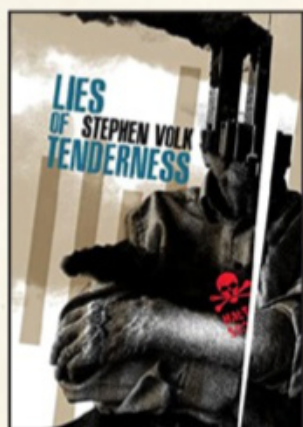
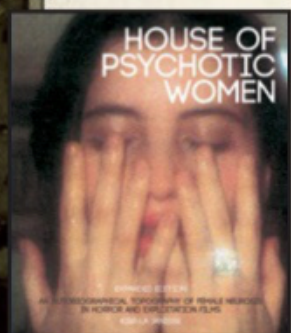
Adam Lowenstein
Columbia University Press

Robin Wood's seminal essay "An Introduction to the American Horror Film" (1978) is the springboard to Adam Lowenstein's bold attempt to question some of its tenets. In his critical conversation with Wood, he aims to move beyond his theoretical model in order to establish a new understanding of the horror genre's relation to social difference.

The author's major shift in that direction is to introduce a new relation, "transformative otherness," i.e. "horror's ability to cast social difference as a matter of ongoing metamorphoses across 'normal' self and 'monstrous' other." It is an intriguing and potentially productive term, but it requires more clarity and illustrative evidence to be fully operational.

Lowenstein is at his best when he shows the ways beyond monolithically imagined Freudian repression and ideological solutions that legislate horror's relations to otherness. He is particularly convincing when he illustrates the limitations of "progressive"/"reactionary" dichotomy by pointing to "spectacle horror" (i.e. the staging of spectacular violence and gore for purposes of audience delight) as an alternative way of understanding the poetics of horror.

His re-readings of classical directors range from forced (Tobe Hooper's portrayal of aging) through footnote-worthy (David Cronenberg's debt to several Jewish thinkers) to relevant (George A. Romero's *Martin* and the trauma of economic otherness). His insights are more valuable when directed to lesser-analyzed names, such as female directors Stephanie Rothman, Marina de Van, and Jennifer Kent, or when he reveals evidence of Ira Levin's influence on Jor-





dan Peele's *Get Out*.

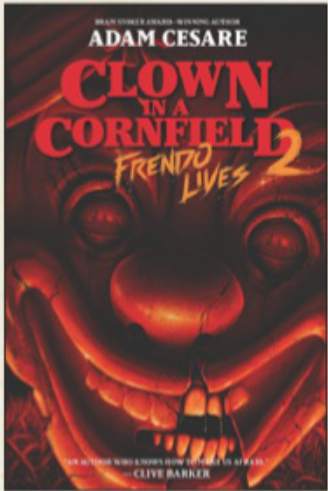
Horror Film and Otherness may not become as ground-breaking and influential (or enjoyable) as Wood's writing, but it certainly is one of the most important recent attempts to rethink and reevaluate horror cinema. Even the readers who do not agree with all of its theses will find them worthy of discussion.

DEJAN OGNJANOVIĆ

CLOWN IN A CORNFIELD 2: FRENDOLIVES

Adam Cesare

HarperTeen



Frenzo is back, and author Adam Cesare, a lifelong horror film aficionado, provides the perfect vehicle for the continuation of the terrifying clown's rampage. In fact, *Clown in a Cornfield 2: Frenzo Lives* is further proof that a sequel can be as engaging as its predecessor.

Cesare expertly connects the end of *Clown in a Cornfield* to the beginning of the sequel without resorting to info dumps, reminding us about what has already transpired without slowing down the narrative. One year ago, the adults of Kettle Springs donned Frenzo masks and massacred the town's teens. Quinn Maybrook, the first book's final girl, is now attending college and attempting to move forward with her life, along with fellow survivors Rust Vance and Cole Hill. While Quinn struggles to maintain normalcy and Cole and Rust navigate their relationship amidst unrelenting

media scrutiny, readers are given hints about what has transpired in the past year.

Of course, a good horror sequel must up the ante and provide a leveled-up villain, more and bloodier kills, fresh faces, and a new mystery to unravel: *Frenzo Lives* hits all of those marks. Cesare ramps up the action about one-third of the way through the story and never lets up. This prolonged intensity imbues the book with that same "no one is safe" feeling that you get from a great slasher film. The new characters – including Jerri, a genderfluid teen trying to piece her life together after the first massacre – are uniformly well-crafted, raising the stakes and making the readers care about what happens to them. Were it not for this emphasis on character development, the horror simply wouldn't be as effective.

Clown in a Cornfield 2: Frenzo Lives is a perfect extension of the world Cesare created in the first book, and while it may be marketed as a young adult novel, it will thrill readers of any age.

TRACY ROBINSON

WE CAN NEVER LEAVE THIS PLACE

Eric LaRocca

Trepidatio Publishing

With *We Can Never Leave This Place*, Eric LaRocca serves up an enigmatic tale where the only thing more ravaged than its setting is the degenerating survivors who remain within its ruins. While the origin and the extent of this crumbling world are never quite explained, the novella's greatest strength is found not in the words on the pages, but rather on the fringes

DANTE'S PICK



GHOST EATERS

Clay McLeod Chapman

Quirk

If Clay McLeod Chapman's previous novels hinted at his burgeoning talent for horror storytelling, *Ghost Eaters* sees it fully realized. It's an addiction parable, a ghost story, a haunted house yarn, a zombie-esque siege tale, and a putrid bit of fungal body horror all rolled into one trippy package, and none of it plays out in the expected ways. The book is even more impressive for how long the horror is sustained without respite, causing the reader to become just as trapped in the proceedings as main character Erin is in her near-endless trip.

Ghost is a new drug, one that allows those who drop the pills to see the ghosts that haunt them – typically loved ones who have passed. When Silas, the de facto leader of his circle of friends, dies from an overdose, Erin decides to imbibe some Ghost at the urging of mutual friend Tobias. Maybe this will give her the opportunity to apologize for kicking Silas out shortly before his death. But Erin didn't exactly read the fine print – once you drop Ghost, you won't just see your ghosts, you'll see *all the ghosts*, and given its long, brutal history, Richmond, Virginia, has many restless spirits. Also, there's no way to put that genie back in the

bottle. And those spirits, Erin soon discovers, are drawn to those who take the drug. They hunger to lick it off its users' skin, out of their orifices, and they might even try to tear someone apart to get it.

Can Erin save any of her friends from Ghost's grip? Hell, at this point, can she even save herself? Chapman's story grows weirder, wilder, and gorier with each turn of the page. A compelling, relentless read, *Ghost Eaters* is the kind of book you need to follow with a long shower, but you still won't feel clean, because once you've consumed it, some of those treacherous spores will be inside you too. Forever. *Growing*.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



New book *Toil & Trouble* highlights the most influential women in occult history – both practitioners and debunkers

Bewitching Women

by Monica S. Ruebler

While countless volumes of occult history exist, not many have focused on the role the occult played for women in the various eras they practiced it. Turns out, this history is as much about spirits, seances, and rituals as it is about politics and a drive for voice and autonomy.

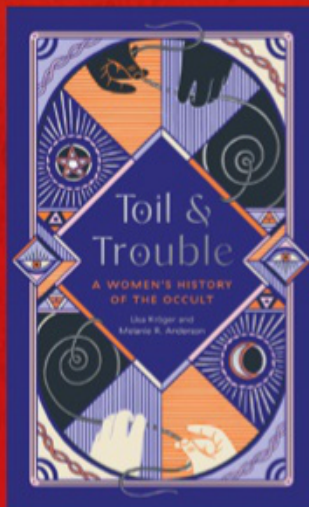
“When I read about the history of Spiritualism several years ago and its connections to social movements of the time, such as abolition and women’s rights, I became fascinated with how the history of the occult connects to women’s history and experience in the United States,” says Melanie R. Anderson, co-author of *Toil & Trouble: A Women’s History of the Occult* (out October 25 from Quirk).

“I love a good occult history,” co-author Lisa Kröger adds, “but a lot of them tend to focus on the sensational aspects of the occult, like some of the charismatic leaders or experimental groups, but not many of them focus on the female experience within these histories. We wanted to examine why women were drawn to the occult – and how they were using occult tools and occult language to leverage power.”

Toil & Trouble is comprised of five themed sections – Designing Witches (Shaping the Occult), The Spirits Go To Washington (Politicizing the Occult), Ghosts And Glory (Monetizing the Occult), Paranormal Investigation (Challenging the Occult), and 100% That Witch (Embracing the Occult). Within are deep dives into voodoo priestess Marie Laveau, spirit mediums The Fox Sisters, tarot artist Pamela Coleman Smith, witches Starhawk and Silver RavenWolf, and influential psychics Joan Quigley and Miss Cleo, as well as movements such as W.I.T.C.H. (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, see *RM#178*), and even fictional properties (*The Craft*, *The X-Files*, *Dungeons & Dragons*). It quickly becomes evident that women’s experiences have greatly differed from those of their male counterparts.

“For the most part, women have been punished for anything that seems even remotely occult, while men can participate in similar activities and escape the negative label,” Kröger notes. “Looking at early European history, women who acted as doctors, perhaps making herbal tinctures to heal or treat illness, were labelled as dangerous or even as a witch. Men, though, could be seen as scientists or part of the legitimate medical community. Hysteria and skepticism seem to swirl around women whenever they step outside of societal gender roles. The same thing happens with non-white communities too, for instance, when we’ve seen Indigenous medical practices presented as a kind of folk magic rather than ‘legitimate’ medicine.”

Still, as *Toil & Trouble* illustrates over its 336 pages, while the occult could result in negative attention for its female practitioners, it could also bring great reward and personal freedom.



“[It was a] path to self-sufficiency,” Anderson explains. “Women have, historically, had fewer opportunities for work outside of the home than men, but Spiritualist mediums were able to be self-employed, hosting seances in their homes. Then, on top of that, during the sessions, they could offer their own opinions on current events while making it seem that they were mouthpieces for male spirits. They also could become more actively involved in the realm of religion.”

Kröger and Anderson extend their study to include a section on skeptics and debunkers. To the authors, the tension between opponents and participants is an inseparable part of the occult narrative and there is value in the work of women such as Eleanor Sidgwick and Rose Mackenberg, who were motivated to protect the vulnerable from “fraud they had witnessed in mediums’ parlors.”

Finally, *Toil & Trouble* turns the spotlight on contemporary occult circles, which have surged in the internet age. Today’s practitioners are an incredibly diverse group who are harnessing digital technology to reach more people than ever.

“[They] are really working to make sure that everyone is included, and we wanted to celebrate that,” says Kröger. “We chose [to spotlight] people who were non-white working in the American occult space and people who were part of the queer and trans occult communities. It’s truly breathtaking to see how far we’ve come in the American occult. ... Our culture has appropriated the term ‘witch’ as a powerful label, rather than one that could come with a death sentence. But we are also living in a time where people’s rights and freedoms are actually being rolled back. ... We wanted to show how today’s practitioners are using the occult space to keep the fight for rights alive.” 🧿

of things left unsaid. It's within these grey areas between the lines that readers are granted the freedom to reflect and apply their own conclusions. To help guide us is fifteen-year-old Mara and her mother, who've just had the body of Mara's dad returned to them after a scavenging trip turned deadly. Left to fend for themselves in their sewage-flooded apartment, the world outside rages on and closes in on their lives.



Mara and her mom share a strained relationship that only gets worse (and a whole lot weirder) when a giant spider named Rake shows up at their door with promises to protect them and bring dear ol' dad back to life so long as they stick to their end of the deal. As the spider makes itself at home, Mara's mother's resentment for her daughter boils over as her bond with Rake deepens. As we struggle to separate pure chaos from veiled intentions, the truth behind that resentment quickly unfurls. This leads to some serious what-the-fuck occurrences that are bound to wring legitimate shock and repulsion from even the heartiest of readers.

We Can Never Leave This Place is an unrelenting storm of familial conflict, heartache, deception, and the pursuit of hope within a nightmare terrain. With it, LaRocca proves himself a fresh voice in horror and one more than capable of pulling us into his uniquely visceral imagination.

RICK HIPSON

LURE

Tim McGregor
Tenebrous Press

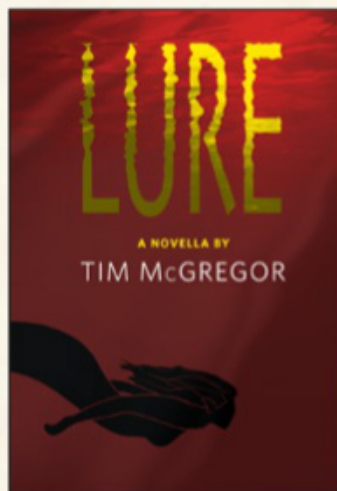
Sure, zombies, vampires, and werewolves are scary, but have you read the one about the mermaid? She can go head-to-head with any of those monsters in terms of body count and viciousness, and in Tim McGregor's *Lure*, she brings the seaside fishing town of Torgrimsvær to its knees.

Lure's fifteen-year-old narrator, Kaspar Lensman, is a reverend's son. His father presides over a church with a giant sea monster hanging above the altar and a congregation that looks at him, an outsider to their community, with some disdain. When a mermaid is spotted off the shore, the town's hunters and fishermen race after her. They injure the creature, and Kaspar later finds her hiding in a building by the water where he captures fish (and once had trysts with his sweetheart before her arranged marriage to a local hunter). Kaspar brings medicine to heal the mermaid's wounds and he's bitten, starting a chain of events that includes telling his father about the injured creature and then releasing her back into the sea when the town's elders decide she must be destroyed. But that's really only the start of it; what comes next is brutal, bloody, and unrelenting, as the mermaid proves that she's not just a fish woman but a force of nature that Torgrimsvær is wholly unprepared for.

McGregor puts his impressive world-building talents on full display here. Despite *Lure's* scant 116 pages, the town, its people, and the hardscrabble lives lived there – where almost nothing grows, and their survival depends entirely on the sea – are fully realized. And when certain doom befalls them, it's the reader who feels it in the gut first. There's also a tangible sense that all this bloodshed could have all been avoided – or perhaps not, given who the townsfolk are and given what the mermaid is.

Regardless, *Lure* makes a convincing case that the genre needs more mermaid horror.

MONICA S. KUEBLER



LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

HELL FOLLOWED WITH US

It wasn't until I was in my twenties that I realized how prevalent dead parents were in Disney films. I simply never noticed as a kid because my mom died when I was seven, so "dead parent" was my everyday reality. I felt less isolated seeing my trauma reflected in those characters' experiences – especially critical in the 1980s when *we didn't talk about these things*. That's a long way of saying that it's important to see some reflection of ourselves in the media we consume.

I've now been writing for *RM* for twenty years, just a few years shy of half my lifetime, and it's been remarkable to watch the publishing industry evolve, from emerging technologies (hello eBooks!) to the recent push towards more diverse stories by more diverse authors. Simply put, a book like Andrew Joseph White's *Hell Followed with Us* wouldn't have landed on my desk two decades ago and not from a children's publisher like Peachtree Publishing.

The young adult novel picks up several years into an apocalypse instigated by a Christian sect known as the Angelic Movement that's already killed millions via a weaponized disease. When it isn't fatal, it transforms the infected into grisly abominations (some small and others hulking monstrosities comprised of many mutated bodies). These creatures are then subjugated and used to kill off non-believers. Trans-boy Benji and his mom joined when he was a child and he's since been infected with an improved version of the disease in the hopes that it will turn him into a "Seraph," a powerful abomination that can lead the movement to worldwide victory. Benji escapes when the group he's with is ambushed by a squad of survivors from the local LGBTQ+ community centre, but he fears that when his new friends discover he's about to become a monster, they won't accept him either.

As White writes in his Letter From The Author, *Hell Followed with Us* is "a book about queer kids at the end of the world trying to grow up." Given that, the themes of identity, transformation, and acceptance (personal, communal, societal) all figure in as strongly as you'd expect them to. It's a story that will undoubtedly resonate with teens whose families denied their identities and chose their religious beliefs over their offspring. White confesses in the Acknowledgements that the novel "began life as a fit of rage" when he was barely out of his teens himself, and horror is a fitting genre to amplify that primal scream. So, come for the representation, stay for the body horror, and remember the name Andrew Joseph White, because this is one hell of a debut.

MONICA S. KUEBLER

Follow Library of the Damned on Twitter @damnedlibrary



THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY PAIGE REYNOLDS

208



SCARY MOVIES AND CHILL

THIS MONTH:
THE SINISTER SENTIMENTALISM OF STEVEN RHODES

A **RODMORQUE** COLLECTIBLE



Steven Rhodes grew up in the 1970s and '80s and spends his time revisiting childhood memories from those eras with a deep sense of nostalgia... infused with a twist of darkness. His make-believe books *Let's Summon Demons*, *Necromancy for Beginners*, and *E is For Existential Dread* are a perfect combination of retro kid nostalgia shot through with a macabre sense of humour. No question, Rhodes has cornered the market of elementary school art mashed up with demonic possession, masked killers, and satanic cults!

NAME

Steven Rhodes

HOMETOWN

Brisbane, Australia

WEAPON OF CHOICE

"I always begin with drawings on paper and I use brush pens for inking the linework. This is then scanned, and I do all my colouring, typography, and refinements digitally."

DEEDS

"Probably my book, *My Little Occult Book Club* [2020, from Chronicle Books]. It's a compilation of a lot of my work from the last five years. It's all packaged up like an old-school book club catalogue, complete with mail-away offers, activities, and a bonus poster!"

MY NIGHTMARE FUEL

"My main inspiration is all the retro artwork from the '70s and '80s that I remember from my childhood. Stuff like book covers, movie posters, arcade graphics, toy packaging, and board game boxes. All this mixed with a healthy dose of occult horror."

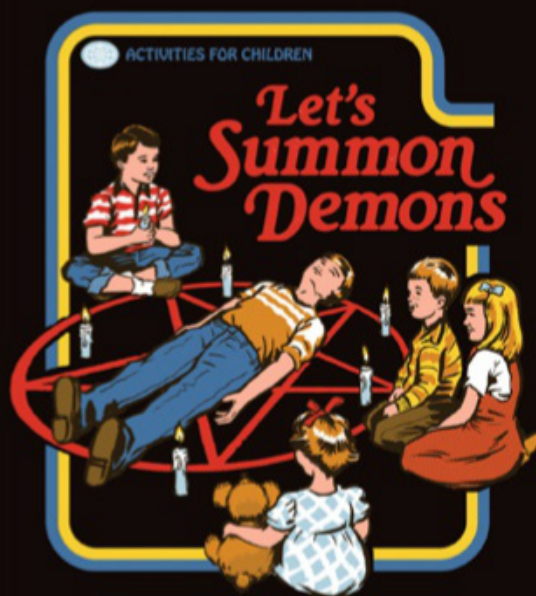
LAST WORDS

"Imagine if a baby was born with little shoes on. That would be so weird!"

RESTING PLACE

Find [@stevenrhodesart](https://www.instagram.com/stevenrhodesart) on Instagram, and his shop at [stevenrhodes.threadless.com](https://www.stevenrhodes.threadless.com).

FOLLOW PAIGE ON INSTAGRAM
@PAIGEREYNOLDSART



A DUMPSTER DIVE INTO HORROR'S ODDS & CURIOS

DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

BY
STACIE
PONDER

THEY'RE QUITE SOMETHING, AREN'T THEY – those rare instances when you shuffle out of a theatre and

feel certain that you've just seen something that is sure to change the course of horror as we know it. I've been fortunate enough to see many a film that would go on to become a genre classic during their initial theatrical runs (yes, I'm obviously talking about 2006's *Stay Alive*), but lo, I cannot help but lament all the history I have missed due to the curse of my youth! Ah, to be in the audience for John Carpenter's *Halloween* back in 1978, before slasher flicks became a by-the-numbers trope. Or to have borne witness to its predecessor *Psycho*, only to have my mind absolutely blown to bits by the unexpected violence and the shocking depiction of a toilet bowl. But if I could turn back the clock and experience one movie with a crowd full of fellow first-timers, I'd head right to December 26, 1973 and sit my ass down for the premiere of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist*.

After all, it's the film that had unsuspecting audiences barfing, passing out, getting frightened out of their gourds, and getting righted with God, and that's a circus I would love to have chomped popcorn to. Instead, I had to settle for a first viewing at a sleepover as a teen, on VHS on a tiny TV. To be fair, this is an excellent way to watch horror movies. But even if it weren't, it's *The Exorcist* we're talking about, and its impact was not lessened without the added spectacle of people fainting in the aisles.

It's not exactly breaking news to say that there are countless good reasons why it consistently ranks at or near the top of all those "scariest movies ever" lists that we love arguing over. Listen, I know it's just Eileen Dietz in makeup, okay? But the first time I saw that split-second flash of Pazuzu all those years ago, it triggered something in my lizard brain that had me trembling in terror. Same thing with Mercedes McCambridge's "30-packs-an-hour" demon voice. The gross makeup, the histrionics, and yes, even the projectile pea soup are all the stuff of nightmares. But these days, I find

the scariest bits of *The Exorcist* to be the details that penetrate my mind like a bloody crucifix – and it's all the things we don't see.

Take, for example, that very crucifix. Twelve-year-old Regan MacNeil is having issues, you might say. She's somehow been making her whole bed shake. She's suddenly got awful breath. And boy, she's been saying the darndest things! Doctors are baffled, Regan's mother Chris is distraught, and Chris' friend Burke Dennings is dead, his body found at the base of the long staircase underneath Regan's window. Someone – likely one of Chris' staff – has placed a crucifix under Regan's pillow in an attempt to help. A non-religious Chris takes it downstairs, then is interviewed by a detective regarding Dennings' death. Seconds after the interview, the demon inside Regan is forcing her to assault herself with the crucifix. Did Regan, unbeknownst to her mother and us, the audience, come downstairs to get it?

For someone who spends the bulk of the film in her bedroom, Regan sure does roam and get up to plenty of no good. We only know this by picking up the clues in the details and connecting the dots; after all, to see her doing it would be, in Pazuzu's words, "much too vulgar a display of power." The most we get (director's cut spider-walk aside) is a glimpse of her shadow, obscured by a curtain, in her bedroom window... when she's supposed to be restrained in bed. Much earlier in the film, she makes her way to a church across town to defile the Virgin Mary statue. And while everyone thought she was sick and asleep, she somehow lured Burke to her room, twisted his head clean around, and pushed him out of her window.

These quiet moments and inferences showing us that the demon is toying with everyone and showing only tiny hints of its true power are ultimately far more unsettling than the crazy head-spinning antics we do witness. And to think, I would have missed them all if I had to listen to someone scream-praying and puking next to me in the theatre. Take that, 1973! 🖤





SALES *from the* CRYPT

ELVIRA
LORD OF THE FEAR
EVIL DEAD
GREEPSHOW
FULCI
& MANY MORE!

**MESSED UP
PUZZLES**
MESSEDUPPUZZLES.COM

**JIGSAW PUZZLES
FOR MESSED UP
PEOPLE LIKE YOU**
USE CODE MORGUE
FOR 10% OFF!

KREEPSVILLE

www.kreepsville666.com

scan me

PALLBEARER PRESS

GET 10% OFF WITH CODE **PBP10** AT CHECKOUT
WWW.PALLBEARERPRESS.COM OFFER VALID 9/01 - 10/31 2022

**ONE MILLION
COMIX
ONLINE**

ONEMILLIONCOMIX.COM

531 YONGE ST. TORONTO, ONTARIO M4Y 1Y5 PHONE NUMBER: 416-934-1615

**NIKOS CONSTANT
KEN LANDGRAF
ULTIMATE OCEANS**

HAPPY HALLOWEEN

Modulator
If you hear the sound, it is too late.
09/06/2022
A New Giallo
in digital and print
For more Horror and Punk Fiction
check out my site.
davidsharpwriter.com

**A
BLOODY
CHASM**

Listen, if you dare...

HALLOWEEN LIVES AT SHOPSINISTER.COM
DARK ART • PINS • PATCHES • STICKERS • APPAREL
CREATED BY DARK ARTIST CHAD SAVAGE
USE COUPON CODE **RUEMORGUE25** FOR 15% OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER

RUE MORGUE

AND

COFFEE TO DIE FOR
DEADLY GROUNDS
WWW.DEADLYGROUNDSCOFFEE.CA



WANT YOU TO
**TRY OUR
NEW
BONE-CHILLING
BREW!**



15 NEW SUBSCRIBERS will receive a bag of Rue Brue coffee courtesy of Deadly Grounds.

WINNERS WILL BE CHOSEN AT RANDOM AND NOTIFIED BY PHONE OR EMAIL.



COLLECTIBLE BACK ISSUES

PURCHASE INSTANTLY! RUE MORGUE ACCEPTS CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS AT RUE-MORGUE.COM. CLICK ON "SHOPPE."



GIVE THE GIFT OF BLOOD!
IS YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FOR A FRIEND? CHECK THE BOX BELOW AND A GIFT NOTE WILL BE INCLUDED WITH THE FIRST ISSUE!

50% OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE!

RUE MORGUE DIGITAL
SUBSCRIBE TO THE **WORLD'S #1 HORROR MAGAZINE** NOW
VISIT RUE-MORGUE.COM OR YOUR DEVICE'S APP STORE

PLEASE HAVE THE BOOGEYMAN DELIVER MY SUBSCRIPTION TO MY CRYPT! SEND ME...



USA		
6 Issues Classic	US\$59.95	=====
6 Issues Deluxe (Includes Digital Archives)	US\$99.95	=====
CANADA		
6 Issues Classic	CAS69.95	=====
6 Issues Deluxe (Includes Digital Archives)	CAS109.95	=====
OVERSEAS		
6 Issues Classic	US\$94.95	=====
6 Issues Deluxe (Includes Digital Archives)	US\$149.95	=====

BEGIN MY SUBSCRIPTION WITH ISSUE #

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

PROVINCE/STATE:

POSTAL CODE/ZIP:

PHONE:

EMAIL:

Please send cheque or INTERNATIONAL money order payable to: MARRS MEDIA INC. 1411 Dufferin Street, Toronto, ON, M6H 4C7, Canada. Please allow three to six weeks for delivery.

VISIT RUE-MORGUE.COM FOR MORE SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS

Offer expires October 31, 2022

AUDIO DROME

DEADLY

DANGEROUS

DECENT

DULL

DRIVEL

DOA
DEAD ON
ARRIVAL

REVIEWS BY ALEX DELLER, AARON VON LUPTON, HATE MIOR,
DANIEL ROBERTSON, AND JEFF SZPIRGLAS

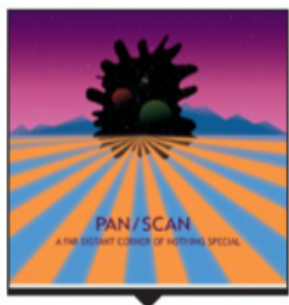


M.R. JAMES / ROBERT LLOYD PARRY

Count Magnus

CADABRA RECORDS

Grab a pint of your favourite English bitter and pull up a seat at the bar. Robert Lloyd Parry, who has been performing the ghost tales of M.R. James since 2005, has his latest yarn to spin: the 1904 supernatural story *Count Magnus*. A recognized expert in James' work, Parry brings to life with educated accuracy the various characters in this story of a seasoned travel writer discovering the mysterious history of Count Magnus while stopping in Sweden. Cadabra Records brings in a duo of soundtrack-influenced recording artists for the 2XLP's score: Pentagram Home Video and Chris Bozzone. It's a novel approach, as the artists shift between acoustic and electronic instrumentation as character and narrative shifts necessitate. This 150-gram pressing comes with liner notes from weird fiction expert and Cadabra vet S.T. Joshi and is wrapped in beautifully ominous artwork by Matthew Jaffe. Consider *Count Magnus* one of Cadabra's more intimate and engaging recorded tales to date. ☠☠☠☠ **AVL**



PAN/SCAN

A Far Distant Corner of Nothing Special

CINEPLOIT

On its previous outing, *Cinematic Lies*, Pan/Scan fused rock 'n' roll tropes with synthwave, sampled in

SPOKEN WORD

dissonant grand piano, creating a diverse range of tonalities with brief running times that approximated the rhythms of an imagined film. This new collection, designed around the concept of secret telekinetic experiments on a human mind, retains the group's reverberant widescreen sound, which makes for pleasing ear candy. *A Far Distant Corner* eschews brevity in favour of extended tracks (at 4:40, the opening cut "Displaced" is the briefest by far, while "Drip Stream" stretches to seventeen minutes), and the band is clearly channelling a more languorous vibe for a series of mood pieces designed to put you in a meditative state. And while the looping synth arpeggios and washes of sound fulfill the premise, *A Far Distant Corner of Nothing Special* feels less ambitious and playful than previous efforts. ☠☠☠ **JS**



KLAUS SCHULZE

Deus Arrakis

SPV RECORDINGS

This year saw the passing of one of the all-time great pioneers of electronic music, Klaus Schulze. While it would be a stretch to call Schulze a "horror artist" per se, he was one of future soundtrack artists Tangerine Dream's first drummers, appearing on their debut album *Electronic Meditation* (1970), and later scoring the Austrian nasty horror film *Angst* (1983). More importantly, his synth work was an obvious precursor to today's modern obsession with Carpenter-esque electronic horror scores, not to mention their all-important atmosphere. Schulze loved him some *Dune*, collaborating with shock rock legend Arthur Brown on an album of the same name in 1979, before, incredibly, working with Hans Zimmer on the soundtrack to the recent 2021 film. As the title suggests, this final album by Schulze delves further into Frank Herbert's

ELECTRONIC

world, conjuring up tranquil, dream-like excursions that will take you to places more peaceful than chaotic. Not a bad place to rest. ☠☠☠½ **AVL**



STRAIGHT RAZOR

Vol.2

NEGATIVE GAIN

Omar Doom is no stranger to the sounds of cult film, having appeared in *Grindhouse*, *Death Proof* and, most notably, *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). Given that pedigree, he took to the underground electronic music scene last year with confidence and maturity on his first EP *Vol.1* under solo moniker Straight Razor. He now returns with *Vol.2*, continuing his throughline of dark electro jams that weave together industrial, dark synth, and the freshness of EBM. The album kicks off with powerful dark beats on "Enemy" and continues along with a soundtrack to late-night drives or sweat in the club. Following the lead of such artists as Perturbator, Dav Dralleon, and SIERRA, *Vol.2* sets the

ELECTRONIC

tone for a dystopian nightmare. Hellectro is all about brooding music that can play both in the club and while you're driving a getaway car during the apocalypse, and Straight Razor is at the forefront of that movement.

☠☠☠☠ **HM**



HANGTOWN

Tales from the Gun

ALTERED STATE OF REVERB

Just like in film, the horror western is an underrepresented subgenre in music. There is, however, a rich tradition of murder ballads sung by cowboys round the campfire, such as Lefty Frizzell's "The Long Black Veil," Marty Robbins' "Big Iron," or Nick Cave's "Red Right Hand." San Francisco's Hangtown puts those influences in a blender, fusing Morricone, Dick Dale, and *Mad Max*, and leaving behind scorched earth. The evil mastermind is guitarist Robb Grimes, of SF thrash metal outfit Asada Messiah. The circle in the middle of his musical Venn diagram must be

SURF

LET THE RIGHT ONE IN

Johan Söderqvist

SVART RECORDS

Just as *Let The Right One In* nears its fifteenth anniversary, Finland-based Svart Records exhumes Johan Söderqvist's score for a limited edition vinyl release, now in a deluxe package with a gatefold sleeve and original poster art.

Performed by the Slovak National Symphony Orchestra, the score features a couple of choice instruments associated with the genre (the hurdy-gurdy, the waterphone), but Söderqvist makes sure to never drown in dissonance or go for easy sonic jump scares. Instead, he plays to the movie's themes of isolation for lead characters Eli and Oscar, and the use of solo instruments (such as the piano on "Death of Håkan," or the mournful guitar of the title track) only further emphasizes themes of loneliness. A different approach would have steered the film in an entirely different direction, but listening to the music independently reveals how much of the film's emotional resonance is due to the composer's efforts. ☠☠☠☠☠ **JS**

SOUNDTRACK



PODCASTS FROM BEYOND



Books in the Freezer

THEME: Horror fiction

FORMAT: Discussion

FREQUENCY: Bi-weekly

Rarely do we say, "The movie was better than the book," so why do most horror podcasts focus solely on film? Luckily, *Books in the Freezer* is here to offer our ears a refreshing

antidote with bi-weekly deep dives into the world of horror fiction. Hinging on the idea that some books are so scary they ought to be locked up in the icebox for everyone's safety, this podcast has been broadening horror fans' literary horizons since 2017. Hosted by Stephanie Gagnon, each 45-minute episode features a different guest co-host – many of whom are independent horror artists and writers by trade. Everyone comes to the table with several pieces of literature pertaining to a general theme, such as witches, summer camp, the women of Stephen King's stories, graphic novels, urban legends, small press releases, and horror poetry. After discussing the finer points of each work, their fright factor is ranked on a scale of "freezer worthy" to "room temperature." Not only is Gagnon's voice delightfully soothing, but the conversations presented are intelligent without being pedantic, and fun without getting too goofy. For the Type-A personalities out there, the show notes are comprehensive, with each covered title listed and linked for purchase, meaning there's no pausing and backtracking required to keep your reading list up to speed. If you're looking to find some new lurid literature for your pile, this is the place to start – and then quick, to the library! ☠☠☠ **JESSICA BUCK**



Kowabana

THEME: Japanese fiction found online

FORMAT: Narrated myths and legends

FREQUENCY: Bi-weekly

With the horror community functioning on a global level, aided by online content like podcasts, shows that help bridge the gap between cultures are especially welcome, and a podcast such as *Kowabana* seems a

near-perfect ambassador. In many ways, it is; covering haunted Japanese internet lore for English speakers, a new episode drops every two weeks in a narrated anecdotal format. Starting in 2017, *Kowabana* has covered everything from the internet ghost story Hasshaku-sama, to the Kuchisake-onna (the legendary Slit-Mouthed Woman), the common Noroi, Japanese creepypasta, and a wide range of generally strange happenings from the other side of the globe. It might deeply stretch the "True" title, but that's always half the fun of shows like this. It may be a bit jarring for first-time listeners of *Kowabana* to be greeted by a noticeable Australian accent, but host Tara A. Devlin spent a decade calling Japan home, and the migrant perspective is part of the show's strength. Fluent linguistically and culturally in Japanese, she meticulously curates and translates the tales for each episode. At times, Devlin's delivery can lack dynamics, and some tales feel like they end rather abruptly, leaving listeners with a desire to learn more – not a bad thing, altogether. Undercut with eerie music beneath the narration, and punctuating sound effects that help create atmosphere, the host and creator's passion definitely shines through. So if you like the idea of peering into another land's terrifying tales, *Kowabana* is a trip worth taking, no passport required.. ☠☠☠ **DENMAN C. ANDERSON**

as lonely as the desolate landscapes his songs describe. The storytelling on this debut LP is only matched in weirdness by the instrumentation. If you enjoy doom-laden tales of bleak ghost towns haunted by murderous drifters, soundtracked by fuzzed-out surf licks, banjo, and even the occasional theremin, well, friend, Hangtown has a noose fitted just for you.

☠☠☠☠½ **DR**



BLACK VALLEY MOON

SURF

Songs From the Black Valley

OTITIS MEDIA RECORDS

The moon looks more like the sun on this second full-length from gothabilly outfit Black Valley Moon, and the valley, not all that black. These Tampa surfsters added vocalist Ray Vega as a permanent fixture after a spate of instrumental releases, and in doing so, guitarist and founder Sam Williams pulls a Peter Pan, doffing his shadow. The opener, "Choppin' 'n Changin'" is a classic blues riff surfed up with reverb, and it works pretty well. The spacy "Proxima Centauri Calling" follows with Vega sounding rough and punky. But from there, things get decidedly sunnier, with an upbeat instrumental version of Descendents' classic "Bikeage" and "I'm Okay," which sounds like the theme song to a '90s sitcom, albeit with incredibly deft guitar licks. That's the tone of the whole LP: adept instrumentation, adroit arrangements, but less darkness than a sense of silliness from the vocals, which makes the whole endeavour less menacing and simultaneously less fun. ☠☠☠½ **DR**



HOLYROLLER

METAL

Swimming Witches

BLACK DOOMBA

Rather than bona fide wizardry, North Carolina's Holyroller relies on more

muggle-friendly machinations, adopting a familiar brand of rawk that's stood innumerable bands proud since the 1960s. More refined than their previous EP, *Swimming Witches* leans hard on big, ballsy, furrow-browed riffs and Adam Cody's gloomy, booming voice, with the eight tracks touching base with everyone from Mountain and Pentagram to Alabama Thunderpussy and Alice in Chains. For all its swagger, stomp and bombast, though, there's something undeniably stodgy about it all – a sense that you've heard riffs on these riffs too many times before, while tracks "Last Embrace" and "With Time" descend into an awkward cheesiness that's definitely more sink than swim. That said, the subtle, wraithlike vocals lurking beneath "Earthdweller" and the tasteful guitarwork in "The Deuce" definitely weigh in the band's favour – it just needs to tease out these unique elements to be truly spell-binding. ☠☠ **AD**



BLOOD OF INDIGO

METAL

Dawn of the Shaded World

(INDEPENDENT)

Just when metal subgenres couldn't get any more niche, Blood of Indigo comes along with an epic goth metal offering completely inspired by video games like *Dark Souls* and *Bloodborne*. Focused on dark fantasy imagery, this Toronto band begins things a little awkwardly on its debut album, with a way too long (fourteen minute!) electronic/orchestral intro, designed to usher in an epic cinematic atmosphere. From there, the metal kicks in, complete with death vocals, but since this is a goth album, there are still softer strings and piano scattered throughout. There is a definite early Cradle of Filth/Dimmu Borgir sound to the proceedings, and former Cradle keyboardist/vocalist Lindsay Schoolcraft even makes an appearance. Still, there is something that just sounds "off" on this album, the production too robotic and the vocals too harsh to achieve the right aura. Perhaps things get better on level two. ☠☠☠½ **AVL**

Cries of the Mutilated

It's hard to believe this is the tenth Halloween issue since I became Music Editor for *Rue Morgue*; during that time, we've covered nearly all the greats when it comes to the crossover of horror and music. So in proud tradition, allow me to celebrate our 25th anniversary edition by revisiting one of the great, unsung heroes of the dark sonic arts; none other than Diamanda Galás, whose raspy shrieks and experimental vocals have haunted the periphery of the genre since the '80s, all while tying the darkness of her gifts to the political moments of the time. As it turns out, Galás made her return on August 26 with her twelfth studio album, *Broken Gargoyles*, on Intravenous Sound Operations.

For the uninitiated, the American soprano singer and visual artist is just as well-known for her political activism (for causes including AIDS, human rights, and war crimes), as she is for her unnerving music. After performing in jazz bands and doing live vocal performances in the '70s, she released her first solo album *The Litanies of Satan* in 1982, the title track being a musical adaption of a section from Charles Beaudelare's poetry book *Les Fleurs Du Mal*. Soon after, Galás became heavily involved in the AIDS crisis after her brother died from the disease, eventually recording a three-part anthology beginning with *The Divine Punishment* in 1986. Released the same day the Supreme Court upheld Georgia's "sodomy law" that criminalized consensual sex between men, Galás captured the suffering and collective trauma of those affected by the illness and the misguided policies attempting to curb it. From there, the demonic diva continued to touch on the genre while releasing solo al-

bums and collaborating with other artists, including a cover of depressing Hungarian suicide song "Gloomy Sunday" and a lengthy reading of "The Black Cat" on a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe called *Closed on Account of Rabies*. Along the way, Galás set up controversial art installations and performances, including a "die-in" at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York in protest of the Catholic Church's stance on those suffering with HIV – an event for which she was later arrested.

On perhaps a slightly lighter note, Galás also lent her shrill vocals to several horror films, notably Wes Craven's *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, Hideo Nakata's *The Ring Two*, and Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, as well as a closing credits song for Clive Barker's *Lord of Illusions*.

In 2020 Galás began a new installation titled *Broken Gargoyles*, said to be a reflection of the mental scars suffered by soldiers in WWI. *The New York Times* described it as "a vision of fornicating animals, rasped poetry and dreadful mutilation." To accompany the performance, she wrote and recorded a new album by the same name, with harrowing vocal effects, howls, and shrieks conjuring images of deteriorated bodies – the sound of woman truly becoming beast. A wholly immersive package, the CD comes with an extensive

booklet containing four poems, photos of Galás and the *Broken Gargoyles* exhibit, photo documentation of mangled soldiers during WWI, essays on the artist, and even four paintings by the singer.

Galás' music won't likely make it onto anyone's Halloween playlist but I guarantee you won't hear anything scarier this season. Happy Halloween! 🖤



PLAY DEAD



NOW PLAYING > *THE QUARRY*, *FOBIA — ST. DINFNA HOTEL*



THE QUARRY

Supermassive Games
Xbox One, Xbox Series X and S, PS4, PS5,
Windows

It's hard to believe it's been seven years since *Until Dawn* took horror gaming by storm; a cinematic tale of terror that combined the novelty of a branching, choose-your-own-adventure storyline with top-notch motion capture performances from noteworthy Hollywood talent. After three less-compelling titles comprising their *Dark Pictures Anthology* series, Supermassive returns to classic slasher sensibilities with *The Quarry*, a trip down memory lane for the '80s slasher fans that's content to play to its strengths.

Drawing heavy inspiration from movie slashers of yesteryear, players are laced into the unfortunate sneakers of camp counsellors at Hackett's Quarry, which harbours a nasty family secret and some less-than-savoury characters (including Ted Raimi!). Stalked by humans and monsters (or something in between?), gameplay consists of button-mashy QTEs (quick time events) for more immediate moments of danger, third-person exploration, and frequent this-or-that options that reflect each character's headspace in the moment. This



time around, the cast is filled with horror mainstays including David Arquette, Lance Henriksen, and even Grace Zabriskie as a mysterious woman who provides tarot readings in between the game's chapters, offering glimpses into the potential outcome of choices to come. As with *Until Dawn*, it's theoretically possible to complete *The Quarry* with all of the main characters intact, though it's often more fun to lean into the voyeuristic aspects by making careless decisions and watching the blood flow.

For most, *The Quarry's* lasting appeal

will come from replaying it multiple times to experience every possible ending, of which there are reportedly 186. Despite this seemingly impressive number, there's really only one major fork in the road that affects the game's overall ending; the rest boils down to minute details, such as how many pieces of evidence players collected during exploration, or which characters were able to survive.

Though it's unlikely to win over those who find the idea of playing an interactive movie unappealing, fans of Supermassive's other titles and narrative-driven games are sure to find *The Quarry* to be a howlin' good time.

EVAN MILLAR



HEADSHOTS: SLOW-BUILDING ATMOSPHERE, REPLAYABILITY VALUE
MISFIRES: LIMITED INTERACTIVITY



FOBIA — ST. DINFNA HOTEL

Pulsatrix Studios
Xbox One, Xbox Series X and S, PS4, PS5,
Windows

At first glance, *Fobia — St. Dinfna Hotel* appears to be the latest in a long line of *Resident Evil* clones, albeit from the first-person perspective that the series has adopted for its latest entries. The first title from Brazilian developer Pulsatrix Studios, *Fobia* leans heavily on its influences, though the amount of polish and pervading dread elevates it far beyond the majority of its ilk.

After hearing about numerous disappearances and sightings of a ghostly young girl sporting a creepy gas mask, young journalist Roberto travels to the titular hotel in search of his first big break. He soon discovers some very strange things there, including a camera with the power to make walls appear or disappear, as well as fleshy protrusions that have completely overtaken large portions of the ornate and opulent building. Armed with only a pistol and a shotgun, Roberto

must fend off giant carnivorous insects that spring from the walls, skeletal beings with tendrilled maws and exposed glowing hearts, and giant fucking spiders. And then there's *Fobia's* equivalent of *Resident Evil 3's* Nemesis: a hulking mutant with one massive arm composed of the same disgusting red tissue that's scattered about the hotel.

While each visual element of *Fobia's* identity is something more seasoned horror gamers will likely recognize from older games, Pulsatrix utilizes the Unreal Engine to produce some truly stunning effects. Light refracts off of Roberto's fingernails, for example, and shadows dance around the otherworldly artifacts he finds.

Of course, no *Resident Evil*-inspired game is complete without a dozen or so completely illogical and overdone puz-



zles, of which *Fobia* has plenty. These range from piecing together a master key with rotating rings marked with specific symbols, to elevator repair work, matching keys to specific doors, and a decent amount of backtracking through previously visited areas.

It never quite reaches the heights of other first-person spookshows such as *Outlast*, but *Fobia — St. Dinfna Hotel* proves that Pulsatrix Studios boasts a capable team that knows what works when it comes to survival horror.

EVAN MILLAR



HEADSHOTS: SOLID TENSION AND ATMOSPHERE, SATISFYING PUZZLE MECHANICS
MISFIRES: FORMAT ISN'T TERRIBLY ORIGINAL

I PREVAIL

THE NEW ALBUM
TRUE POWER

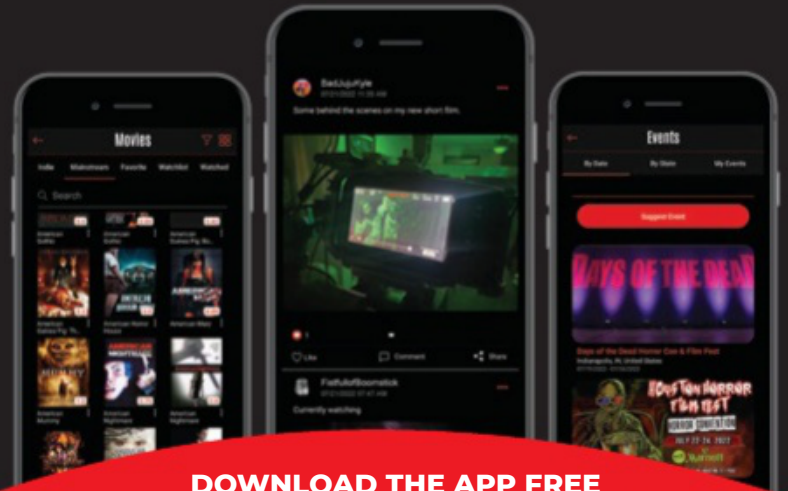


8.19.22



SLASHER

THE **SOCIAL NETWORK** FOR
HORROR
JOIN **SLASHER** AND
EXPERIENCE HORROR THE WAY
IT WAS MEANT TO BE!



DOWNLOAD THE APP FREE



OCTOBER 27 8PM  **CIUT 89.5 FM**

HORRIFYING! BLOOD CURDLING!

LIKE NOTHING YOUR EYES HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE!

Static Cosmic Horror Classic
"The Call Of Cthulhu"
with live soundtrack by

NIGHT CHILL

Mark Mallory & the **WASAGAS**

THE SCREAM AGERS

COSTUME CONTEST

SCARY PRIZES!

\$10 DOORS ONLY

PRESENTED BY MOONBOO'S BALLROOM & CIUT 89.5 FM IN ASSOCIATION WITH

RUE MORCUE

 **HARD LUCK BAR** 
772A Dundas St W, Toronto, ON

SO MUCH HAS COME SINCE *RUE MORGUE* BEGAN PUBLISHING A QUARTER OF A CENTURY AGO. IN THE SPIRIT OF ENHANCING YOUR ANNUAL TRADITIONS, WE LOOK BACK 25 YEARS TO ASK WHAT MODERN HORROR CLASSIC REIGNS SUPREME AS ESSENTIAL VIEWING FOR OCTOBER 31? TWO OF OUR WRITERS ENTER THE RING TO BATTLE IT OUT!

WHAT IS THE BEST HORROR MOVIE OF THE PAST 25 YEARS TO WATCH ON HALLOWEEN NIGHT?

TRICK 'R TREAT (2007)

JOHN W. BOWEN

"TRT writer/director Michael Dougherty dives deeper into the occasion itself, finding menace hiding around every corner."

IN REAL LIFE, *RUE MORGUE* THROWS THE ALL-TIME MOTHERSCRATCHER OF A HALLOWEEN PARTY, but we gotta give props to *Trick 'R Treat*'s fictitious town of Warren Valley, Ohio, where the big night is a mash-up of New Year's Eve, the Fourth of July, and Mardi Gras. But while costumed locals drink, dance, and debauch the night away in the streets, darker doings unfold behind closed doors, in the nearby woods and, in one case, a local rock quarry. Among them, a crochety recluse boycotting the revelry gets his comeuppance from a diminutive demon; a middle-school principal unleashes some deadly pranks of his own; and a local legend is conjured for revenge when mean tweens prank a lonely misfit.

Trick 'R Treat continues the celebrated tradition of the horror anthology film, but structurally it's quite unlike any of its predecessors: five stories unfold in non-linear, *Pulp Fiction* fashion, all bleeding into and out of each other to such a degree that the actual number is ambiguous. (In fact, two take place simultaneously in neighbouring houses without the occupants realizing it, although we see them at opposite ends of the movie.)

Above all, my enduring attachment to *Trick 'R Treat* stems from the way it mirrors my own feelings since childhood about Halloween itself: beneath the occasion's innocuous, childish charms, there is a vague element of threat that makes it all the more magical. John Carpenter used this to tremendous effect as a backdrop for his iconic 1978 film *Halloween*, whereas TRT writer/director Michael Dougherty dives deeper into the occasion itself, finding menace hiding around every corner. Sure, we were just costumed kids on a sugar binge (traded later in life for stronger substances), but didn't we always suspect that real monsters lurked beneath it all, just waiting for some careless reveller to unleash them? I thought so, and clearly so does Dougherty.



DRAG ME TO HELL (2009)

RYAN COLEMAN

"Sam Raimi's masterful mixture of horror, comedy, and gross-out gags provides entry points for audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and scare thresholds."

RANCID, ECTOPLASMIC VOMIT SURGES FROM ONE NECROTIC, COLLAPSING MOUTH TO ANOTHER, as a condemned grave surges full of muddy stormwater; a possessed goat gnaws the arm of an exorcist, causing him to vault into the air, face demonically pinched and skewered, and dangle over an open inferno; a whole, putrefied arm is crammed down a woman's throat with the slippery ease of a noodle – Sam Raimi's 2009 film *Drag Me To Hell* is all this and more, making it essential Halloween viewing.

Simultaneously a sickening shocker, a genuine laugh riot, and a storehouse of some of the most dynamic practical and digital effects of this century, the film concerns a loan officer who suspends her human compassion for the advancement of her career (and pays for it dearly), but an underlying subplot suggests a working woman struggling with an eating disorder at the end of the emaciated, fascistically image-obsessed 2000s. And for us horror heads, *Drag Me To Hell* also marked the dark prince of gruesome comedy's long-awaited return to the genre after a decade of being contractually imprisoned in a Marvel black hole.

Drag Me to Hell is the quintessential modern Halloween movie, just as *Evil Dead* was for many among the previous generation. Sam Raimi's masterful mixture of horror, comedy, and gross-out gags provides entry points for audiences of all ages, backgrounds, and scare thresholds. His intuitive knack for luring athletic star performances out of Bambi-eyed softies (you can draw a straight line from Bruce Campbell to Alison Lohman, who delivers one of the great 21st-century performances of the genre), combined with the film's supple 35mm photography, disarmingly welcoming domestic locations, and offbeat lighting compositions that radiate warm, autumnal hues in the midst of madness, make it a seasonal staple. What more could you want?

LAST ISSUE'S WINNER
AS VOTED BY YOU ON FACEBOOK

WHAT IS THE MOST TERRIFYING ANIMATED HORROR FILM EVER MADE?

Akira
(1988)

82%

18%

Gyo:
Tokyo Fish Attack
(2012)

AKIRA IS THE MOST TERRIFYING ANIMATED HORROR FILM EVER MADE.

THEY CRAWL BENEATH

BLU-RAY • DVD • DIGITAL HD

OCTOBER 4



THE LONELIEST BOY IN THE WORLD

DIGITAL HD

OCTOBER 18

BLU-RAY • DVD

DECEMBER 20



Apple iTunes amazon.com

WELLGOUSA.COM



WELL GO USA
ENTERTAINMENT



HALLOWEEN ENDS

OCTOBER 14

MIRAMAX



Transtel
International

IMAX

© 2022 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS
TM & © 2022 UNIVERSAL PICTURES

